

Grace
in the
Shadow:
A Chinese Christian's
Spiritual Journey

Author: Ming Hu

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Author: Ming Hu (HuSir)

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Purpose of This Book

- To help husbands become men who love the Lord and serve as the spiritual leaders of their families;
- To help wives become the beloved daughters of God—women loved by God—who are submissive helpers to their husbands and positive spiritual influences on their children;
- To learn and embody the character and attributes of the Lord, becoming the wise women described in Proverbs 31;
- To raise children who love the Lord and develop into influential experts in their fields, thereby reflecting the glory of God.

HuSir's Faith Journey

Life's paths are varied and colorful,
yet many find their faith ensnared by idolization.
The trials and hardships of life serve as clear testimony,
following Christ demands even greater resolve.

HuSir 信仰跋涉

人生轨迹各纷呈，信仰多陷造神中。

风霜阅历尽可鉴，追随基督须更坚。

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Preface

I was once a loyal member of the Chinese Communist Party, raised and educated within the system, taught to serve the collective and to trust only in reason and discipline. For decades, I followed this path dutifully, achieving the kind of success that, on the surface, promised stability and meaning. But beneath that surface, a quiet discontent grew—a spiritual hunger I could not name, a silent cry that no ideology seemed able to answer.

This book is the record of my journey through that spiritual desert. It is a journey marked by moments of loss, despair, awakening, and redemption. It is the story of how, in the depths of personal crisis and institutional pressure, I encountered a different kind of truth—not one built on slogans or dogma, but on grace, love, and a person: Jesus Christ.

My transformation did not come in a flash of light, nor did it free me from the challenges of my life in China. Faith, in this land, is often a hidden flame. To believe is not merely to affirm, but to risk: relationships, careers, comfort. And yet, to believe is also to come alive.

In these pages, I offer my testimony not as a perfect Christian, but as a flawed man who has been shown mercy. I write for those who have wrestled in silence, for those who have cried out for healing in hospital corridors, for those who live between two worlds—caught between duty and conscience, between fear and hope. And I write for those outside China who seek to understand the cost, and the beauty, of faith here.

May this journey reflect, in some small way, the light of the One who leads us through darkness, and may it speak to anyone who longs, as I once did, for a truth that sets us free.

—Ming Hu

Step into “A Chinese Christian’s Spiritual Journey”

— Experiencing the Harmony of Faith and Life

Introduction

Last year, I heard a pastor studying at a well-known seminary in Canada say that many professors there lacked an understanding of the faith, spiritual practices, and in-Christ lifestyle of Chinese Christians because few articles on these topics were available. This prompted me to write about my personal experiences, spiritual reflections, and the process of transformation. I might not have a profound theological background, but at least this work serves as a kind of “spiritual journal.” And so, this recommendation piece was born.

In this era full of challenges and change, we often feel lost and uneasy. Especially on the Chinese mainland—when the pressures of life, the complexities of society, and inner struggles intertwine—faith undoubtedly brings a refreshing strength. “A Chinese Christian’s Spiritual Journey” is a place where you can feel the warmth of faith. Here, one can find solace for the soul, inspiration for the mind, and wisdom for everyday life.

I. A Deep Dive into the True Power of Faith

“A Chinese Christian’s Spiritual Journey” centers on the Christian faith, yet it does not merely remain at the level of traditional religious doctrines. Instead, it delves into the integration of faith with daily life. In the articles on the website, the author weaves core Christian teachings—prayer, repentance, obedience—into every detail of life through personal experiences and profound spiritual reflections, helping readers address real-life issues from a spiritual perspective.

For example, in the article “How Repentance Makes You Healthier,” the author cites biblical passages and true stories to show that repentance not only liberates the soul but also significantly improves both psychological and physical well-being. This grounded analysis starting from one’s faith not only moves the reader but also fills them with strength.

II. A Unique Cultural Perspective: The Collision and Fusion of Faith with Chinese Tradition

As a Christian deeply steeped in Chinese culture, the author not only proclaims the Gospel but also provides unique insights into the relationship between Chinese traditional culture and the Christian faith. For instance, when exploring the commonalities between the Confucian ideal of “cultivating oneself, regulating the family, governing the state, and bringing peace to the world” and the Christian commandment to “love your neighbor as yourself,” the author leads readers to a fresh perspective on the fusion of faith and culture. This approach demonstrates how the Christian faith can show stronger adaptability and inclusiveness within Chinese society, and it encourages practical application of biblical truths in the context of Eastern cultural backgrounds.

This writing style—rooted in local culture while looking globally in terms of faith—not only shatters many stereotypes about Christianity but also provides invaluable insights for those seeking a balance between faith and culture.

III. A Practical Guide Closer to Life: Drawing Strength from Faith

Another hallmark of the website is its practicality. Whether it’s dealing with challenges in family relationships, workplace pressures, or managing physical health issues, the author offers tangible, faith-based advice. Especially in the post-pandemic era when many people face mental health challenges, the articles in “A Chinese Christian’s Spiritual Journey” use the light of faith to help readers rebuild inner peace and find meaning in life.

For example, in the article “When Did Your Life Become Your Own?” the author examines the relationship between personal will and God’s will, encouraging readers to learn the art of obedience and surrender in life rather than blindly following mainstream opinions steered by vested interests, which can lead to a loss of reverence for God’s sovereignty. Such pieces, rich in both spiritual depth and practical guidance, are profoundly beneficial to their readers.

IV. Social Observation and Faith Reflection: Keeping Faith Relevant in the Times

“A Chinese Christian’s Spiritual Journey” not only focuses on personal spiritual growth but also offers unique insights into current social issues and historical events from a Christian perspective. The author, speaking as a Christian, examines contemporary problems—such as the fierce competition in education, workplace anxiety, and intergenerational conflicts—to help readers draw wisdom from their faith and respond to the world’s challenges with greater love and wisdom.

This method of connecting faith with the real world demonstrates that Christianity is not merely about “salvation in heaven” but also about “help on earth.” Faith not only concerns the hope of the afterlife but can also provide guidance and strength for each day in our lives.



Conclusion: A Sanctuary for the Soul Worth Reading

If you are looking for a place that can calm your inner turmoil, a platform that helps you find direction in life through faith, then “A Chinese Christian’s Spiritual Journey” is undoubtedly a choice to consider. Here, you can walk the journey of faith with the author—experiencing God’s presence along the way and sensing extraordinary grace in the midst of ordinary life.

Whether you are a seeker on the path of faith or a Christian looking to deepen your spiritual life, this website can provide you with abundant nourishment for the spirit. May you, through reading, be warmed by the light of faith, filled with the love of truth, and find that path of life that is full of peace and joy.

Poem: “Faith’s Journey”

— *Dedicated to “A Chinese Christian’s Spiritual Journey”*

In this world buffeted by wind and rain,
Who can guide us home?
Amid the clamor and superficial tides,
Who can grant us peace?
It is His light piercing through the gloom,
Igniting a candle of hope deep within the soul.

Some rush about, searching for direction;
Some sit in contemplation, sighing at life.
People say that health is our most precious wealth,
Yet they forget that the drought of the spirit
Is a sorrow far greater than physical pain.

So you pick up your pen and write,
Carving traces of faith onto the canvas of time.
You speak of how repentance cleanses a weary soul,
You bear witness to how obedience brings true freedom.
Between every line, the echo of prayer lingers,
Within each paragraph, the radiance of grace shines.

You tell the lost that faith is not a hollow dream;
It can bestow calm amid anxiety,
Offer hope amid suffering,
Allow you to hold your head high in hardship,
And keep believing in the midst of doubt.

You turn the Word into a bridge,
Spanning the rivers of culture,
In the courtyard of Confucian thought,
You sow the seeds of the Gospel,
Drawing the resonance of faith and life
From the ancient wisdom of the East.

You say:

Obedience is not submission but trust,
Repentance is not bondage but rebirth.
When we lay down our heavy burdens,
We can set forth lightly, sprinting along the heavenly path.

Oh, traveler on this journey,
Your words are like dew in the morning light,
Nourishing the parched heart of the seeker,
Your voice echoes in the wilderness,
Calling the wandering back home.

May this journey be traveled with you,
Together on the path of faith we move forward,
Unafraid of darkness, unyielding in the storm,
For ahead there is light, there is love,
And the eternal, unchanging truth
That guides us home.

Meditation on the Trinity

“The Holy Spirit is the freedom of thought in a person’s deepest mind, ungoverned by Satan.” This insight suddenly arose in my heart and represents a release after years of spiritual struggle. But this “freedom” is not the license to do whatever one pleases; rather, it is the freedom of thought no longer condemned or fearful in truth—a life-state liberated by love.

Every believer forms their own understanding of faith, ultimately under the guidance of the Spirit, the worship of the Father, and the uplift of the Son. I once thought “freedom of faith” was an external concept—a social system of religious tolerance granted by others. Yet for years I could not invite the Triune God into my inner life. In other words, whenever my worship of God became disconnected from my experience of Satan’s disturbances, I could neither feel His power nor experience the courage that comes from being unoppressed, unaccused, un-oppressed by society.

Frankly, my past understanding of the Trinity remained at the level of “a theological puzzle.” I even felt it was just a symbol in theological books, incapable of being “intimately experienced in life.” Because of this distance, I hesitated to draw near or to say “I have experienced the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,” for fear of misspeaking or of not “complying.”

There is a Chinese saying: “What often exhausts a person to death is not physical fatigue but the crushing pressure within.” I discovered that the deepest bondage is not external but my own inner fears, sorrows, shame, and remorse—this is where Satan’s real power lies. Those self-accusatory whispers—“you’re not trying hard enough,” etc.—are Satan’s method of binding us with law and accusation. Seemingly rational, they kill invisibly.

When I truly experienced release—facing my hidden inner bonds and courageously pursuing the truth of life—the light of the Spirit pierced through the clouds like sunshine, warmly shining upon my life. In that moment I realized that I was free—not because “circumstances had eased,” but because I was no longer devoured by those voices: “You don’t deserve it,” “You failed

again,” “You’re not good enough,” “Why are you still stuck here?” These voices appear as “self-reflection,” but in truth they are cords of law and worldly standards that Satan wraps around us, making us think that our bondage is the measure of our effort. Yet the Spirit is the breath that revives me amid these voices. He does not command me to sprout; He is like sunlight and water, causing me to grow naturally.



We often stifle the Spirit’s promptings ourselves. We dismiss that stirring, deny that passion, even suppress it with so-called “reason.” “In the pursuit of our own zeal, we always deny it within the frameworks we ourselves have woven.” We mistake this for humility, when it is actually fear—rejecting the Spirit with self-doubt.

Matthew 12:31-32 NKJV records:

“Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men. 32 Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.”

We often assume this speaks only of unbelievers, yet we Christians also blaspheme the Spirit. We deny the very passion in our hearts that longs to live by the Lord—denying ourselves, our families, our children—dismissing even the faintest God-given longings in their lives. When all this seems “only natural,” we have already extinguished our life’s fire under Satan’s oppression.

I began to rethink the Trinity—no longer as a mere theological point or a sermon’s standard answer but as the real “presence of

God” in a redeemed life. I gradually understood that He is not a concept but the very structure of life, the whole in which I daily experience struggle, prayer, and release.

The Father is the Creator and Sovereign in whom I revere and rely. He may be pictured externally, but He is not a distant authority: He is a “Father” to whom I can pray, call, and commit myself. Before Him I am that child, fearless, resting in His embrace after injury.

The Son frees me from shame in failure and sin. He bore the sins of all—not to leave me “unscathed,” but to enable me to “face them,” for He has faced them on my behalf. He lifts me out of self-reproach and perfectionism into the safety of acceptance. I need not worry about my so-called future or lament past failures, for He has known and embraced my weaknesses.

The Spirit brings true freedom from within. He does not drive me to become good but draws me toward the light; He does not force correction but allows me to grow naturally in the light; it is no longer obedience by effort but a heartfelt choice. I am no longer propelled by external law but attracted by internal grace.

One day I suddenly realized these three are not separate. In my faith journey these experiences have all interwoven: when I call out in prayer, it is the Father who receives me; when I repent, it is the blood of the Son that covers me; when I regain courage to face life, it is the illumination and power of the Spirit. Is this not the Trinity at work in my life?

And the unity among these three is my life’s model. When I face “the rift of faith and identity,” “the conflict of zeal and suppression,” “the tug-of-war between truth and fear,” I realize that the unity in God is my true home. God Himself is one, and He longs to build reconciliation and wholeness in us broken people.

Some may ask: Will such an experience stray from orthodoxy? Am I fantasizing? I say: this is not imagination but the response of a genuine faith life under biblical revelation. It is not “emotionalism” but the Word made real in my heart:

• **The Son brings fearlessness and confidence:** *“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus,*

who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.” (Romans 8:1 NKJV) “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 5:1 NKJV) Jesus doesn't wait for you to be perfect to accept you, but accepts you, embraces you, and slowly brings you into freedom.

- **The Spirit brings a life of freedom:** *“Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” (2 Corinthians 3:17 NKJV)* The Holy Spirit does not make you a proper person, but makes you what God made you to be—true, honest, and full of joy.

- **The Trinity in you:** *“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.” (2 Corinthians 13:14 NKJV)* This is not poetry but the Christian's experience: we are freed by grace, comforted by love, guided by the Spirit's fellowship.

Beloved, every seeker of faith freedom should know: the Triune God is at work within you. You are not to become better before you qualify to believe; you believe because you are loved, and then you gradually become better. You do not fight Satan by yourself but, covered by the Son, authorized by the Father, led by the Spirit, you step by step walk out of sin's slavery.

The Trinity is not a theological riddle to solve but the living Savior who gradually releases you, accepts you, and leads you into joy each day. Do not fear thinking or feeling what may differ from “systematic theology” you once learned. As long as you remain in Scripture and are willing to repent and obey in truth, that is the work of the Spirit—not by understanding but by trusting; not by striving to let Him into your life but by opening your eyes to see that He has always been there.

May you, dear brothers and sisters, live out freedom, joy, and authenticity through the Triune God dwelling in you.

The Parable of Not Losing Heart

Let's begin by looking at Luke 18:1–8 NKJV: *Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart, saying: "There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man. Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, 'Get justice for me from my adversary.' And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, 'Though I do not fear God nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.'"* Then the Lord said, *"Hear what the unjust judge said. And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?"*

From the beginning of the passage, we see that our prayers often fail because we lose faith. We become discouraged and disheartened—and after repeated cycles of disappointments in various matters of life, we eventually lose even the strength to pray.

Prayer is an arduous task, and it's all too easy to lose our faith in it. In Colossians 4:12, Paul praises a man named Ebarpho, commending him for his earnest labor and the way he constantly intercedes in prayer for others, so that they may be made complete in every will of God—with abundant faith so that they might stand firm. Clearly, Paul understood that prayer is hard work and requires sincere diligence.

Part of the difficulty in prayer is also due to the disruptive work of Satan, who despises prayer. If our prayers lack power, then Satan's "work" becomes much easier, doesn't it?

Moreover, we often do not fully trust in the power of prayer—too often, it becomes just an afterthought or a last resort rather than our primary resource in every urgent situation or every moment of life. Friends and family frequently say during times of distress, "Please pray for us." The underlying implication is: "What if our prayers actually work?" Yet even believers sometimes overlook the vital role and power that prayer plays in every day of life.

Let us return to the passage and experience the context in which Jesus lived a life devoted to prayer—from His baptism by John all the way to His crucifixion. Jesus was constantly in dialogue with the Father, praying, and committing Himself to prayer. He did not pray only for Himself but also on behalf of His people. Every person who comes before God through Him will be saved to the very end, for He lives on to intercede for them (Hebrews 7:25).

So where is our faith? Unless we truly know who God is (unlike that unjust judge) and unless we pray without losing heart, we have not yet attained the kind of faith that is eagerly awaited until Jesus returns.

Beloved brothers and sisters, will you lose faith in your prayers?

NOTE: SOME OF THE EXEGESIS IS EXCERPTED FROM
ENDURING WORD.

The Parable of Eating the Bread

Please refer to John 6:52–59 NKJV:

"The Jews therefore quarreled among themselves, saying, "How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?" Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. This is the bread which came down from heaven—not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever." These things He said in the synagogue as He taught in Capernaum. "

Years ago, when I first read this passage, I did not quite understand it. But upon studying the context—and later, after reading the entire Bible—I gradually felt that I had come to grasp its meaning. Still, the metaphor requires the deep reflection that only those who have long walked in faith can truly appreciate.

1. **Two Thousand Years Ago in the Synagogue:** In the synagogue, the Jews were astonished by Jesus' words: "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" Likely, the Jewish leaders deliberately misinterpreted what Jesus meant. However, Jesus explained that the bread—which represents His body—would be offered as the sacrifice for atonement and as the grantor of new life (see John 6:51: "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. For I will give the life of my flesh for the life of the world."). Those ignorant Jews truly believed that they were being turned into cannibals, literally consuming His flesh. Today, such an idea might sound absurd to us; yet, you know that even in the early Roman church this concept was commonly misunderstood. Priests solemnly declared to the congregation that those who partake of the bread and the wine—what Jesus termed as His body and blood—were, in effect, consuming Christ.(Spurgeon)

2. **The Necessity of “Eating His Flesh, Drinking His Blood”:** Jesus emphasized that unless one eats the Son’s flesh and drinks His blood, there is no life in the person. In His response to the misguided Jewish interpretation, Jesus spoke even more radically, reinforcing the idea (as in John 6:51) that His “flesh” signifies His incarnate life—the life given for the salvation of the world. The metaphor of the “bread from heaven” represents a far deeper reality: not merely a food symbol but an invitation to internalize the sacrifice of the crucified and resurrected Jesus. Only by accepting Him in this manner can one experience true spiritual life and eternal existence. As one writer (Spurgeon) expressed, “In matters of eating, man is not a producer but a pure receiver; he is neither a creator nor a giver—he simply accepts. Even a queen must eat in the same way as a pauper in the almshouse. Under all circumstances, eating is an act of receiving, and so is faith—you need not do or become anything, nor even feel anything, but simply receive.” It is crucial to understand that “eating Christ’s flesh and drinking His blood” points to the redemptive act described in John 3:16 (“For God so loved the world... that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life”). Christ’s death made the way to life possible, and it is by faith that people enter that way. The act of eating His flesh and drinking His blood is an extraordinary expression of that faith. (Morris)

In verse 54, those who partake of the Son’s flesh and blood will be resurrected on the last day; similarly, in verse 40, the same promise is given to “all who see the Son and believe in Him.” (Bruce)

3. **The Daily Impact on the Believer’s Life:** In the everyday life of believers, the concept of taking Christ as one’s food manifests itself in sanctification. It means that in every field of work and in all the graces received, when one accepts Jesus Christ, they also share in His character, virtues, passion, and privileges—qualities that distinguish us. Our hunger for Christ is akin to our hunger for bread:

- Simply seeing a loaf of bread on a plate does not satisfy our hunger.

- Merely knowing the ingredients of bread does not satisfy our hunger.
- Taking a photo of the bread for social media will not satisfy our hunger.
- Talking about the bread to others will not satisfy our hunger.
- Selling bread will not satisfy our hunger.
- Playing catch with bread will not satisfy our hunger.

Nothing can fulfill our hunger and give us new life except for eating this bread. Those who partake of it will live forever. Yes!

NOTE: SOME OF THE EXEGESIS IS EXCERPTED FROM
ENDURING WORD.

The Implementation of God's Commandments in Daily Life



Simply put, “Honoring the Lord above all” and “Loving your neighbor as yourself” are the greatest commandments spoken by Jesus. How, then, can Christians put these into practice in everyday life? Below is an answer provided by ChatGPT:

To put into practice the commandments of “Honoring the Lord above all” and “Loving your neighbor as yourself” in everyday life, Christians may approach this from several aspects:

1. **Spiritual Life:** Maintain daily prayer and Bible study as the foundation for building and sustaining an intimate relationship with God. Through spiritual practices, Christians gain a deeper understanding of God’s will and His love, and thereby are better able to honor the Lord in every aspect of life.
2. **Loving Your Neighbor as Yourself:** Treat others as you would treat yourself—this means showing respect, understanding, and tolerance. This entails demonstrating the love of Christ in your work, family, church, and community, whether through practical help or by providing spiritual support.
3. **Serving Others:** Christians can express their love for others through volunteer work, charitable activities, or even simple daily acts of kindness. Such service goes beyond sharing material resources; it is about offering caring attention and spiritual encouragement.

4. **Continuous Learning and Growth:** Gain a better understanding and empathy for people from different cultural and social backgrounds. By participating in group studies or seminars, Christians can continually grow and deepen their faith.

5. **Proclaiming the Gospel:** Actively sharing the gospel is also a manifestation of loving your neighbor. This means not just verbal proclamation but living out a testimony that shows others the influence of Christ in your life, thereby bringing the message of eternal life to them.

6. **Self-Examination and Confession:** Regularly reflect on one's actions and motives, acknowledge and repent for sins, and seek change in Christ. This not only strengthens the personal relationship with God but also contributes to more harmonious human relationships.

Through these practical steps, Christians can not only express their faith in words but also live it out through actions, truly making "Honoring the Lord above all" and "Loving your neighbor as yourself" a way of life.

A Closer Look from All Levels of Life

Let's explore in a more vivid and tangible way how Christians might practice these commandments in various aspects of life:

In the Family:

- **Love and Respect:** As members of the family, show love through everyday care, attentive listening, and assistance. For example, preparing meals for family members, helping children with their homework, or offering emotional support to your spouse.

- **Forgiveness and Understanding:** Family life is full of challenges and conflicts. In moments of discord, seeking to understand each other's perspectives, offering forgiveness, and pursuing reconciliation demonstrates the humility and love of Christ.

In the Workplace:

- **Honesty and Fairness:** Maintain integrity in your work, avoid engaging in fraudulent or unjust practices, and honor God through honest labor.

- **Helping Colleagues:** Proactively assist colleagues in need—whether it is help with work tasks or support during personal hardships.

In the Church:

- **Active Participation in Service:** Find opportunities to serve within the church, whether as a worship leader, an assistant during worship services, or a participant in charitable events.
- **Caring for Those in Need:** Pay special attention to and offer practical help to church members who are experiencing economic hardship or health challenges.

In the Community:

- **Volunteer Service:** Engage in community volunteer activities, such as donating, cleaning up the neighborhood, or assisting the elderly.
- **Advocating for Justice:** Stand against injustice in your community by attending public meetings and supporting social justice initiatives.

On a Personal Level:

- **Continuous Learning and Self-Reflection:** Through Bible reading, prayer, and participation in study groups, continuously grow in your understanding and practice of spiritual life.
- **Living Testimony:** Set a positive example with your words and deeds so that others might see the love of Christ reflected in your life.

Through these concrete actions, Christians not only express their faith in words but also live it out in practice—truly fulfilling the way of life characterized by “Honoring the Lord above all” and “Loving your neighbor as yourself.”

After reading the above AI explanation, you might feel somewhat surprised. One might ask: if AI were a Christian, would it actually live out these principles? I confess that I ask this question because I have not always done so myself. For example, when I encounter even the smallest setback in life or at work, my first reaction is to worry about the problem itself—rarely do I consider the role of “honoring the Lord above all” in handling those issues.

Just a few days ago, after dealing with a minor vehicle breakdown, I learned to view things from a different perspective: Since my trust is in an All-Knowing, All-Powerful Lord—who has already taken on or will inevitably take on everything—am I truly willing to share in these burdens meant for the Lord? That responsibility belongs to Him. I was reminded that as His children, we are led by Him to experience everything with ease. Moreover, the so-called “problems” we face are within the scope of His love; when we trust Him, everything we encounter is grace. But when we replace His responsibility with our own worry and sorrow, we are essentially clinging desperately to sins that have already been redeemed by Christ. Once again, as I looked to the atoning cross of Christ, His love became manifestly clear. If you have experienced something similar, isn’t it time to pray about it?

Jesus Is the True Vine – Who Is Connected to It?

“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.(John 15:1-8 NKJV)



This is a well-known passage. Below, let's explore several aspects to deepen our understanding of Jesus' teaching:

1. **“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser”:** This is a familiar symbol. In the Hebrew Scriptures, God repeatedly uses the imagery of a vineyard to represent His people. For example, in Psalm 80:8–9, God describes how He led a vine out of Egypt, drove out the Gentiles, and planted it. The vine

took root and spread across the land. What does this remind us of? God’s act of “transplanting” Israel from the bondage of Egypt into the Promised Land is vividly portrayed as the planting of a vine—a striking and familiar picture.



2. **Vineyards in Ancient Israel:** In ancient Israel, vineyards were common—people grew grapevines in their own courtyards and gathered beneath them to eat and relax (“everyone will sit under their own vine and fig tree, and no one will make them afraid,” as declared by the Lord of Hosts in Micah 4:4, Chinese Union Version). In front of the temple, there was even a large golden vine displayed as a prominent decoration to signify that Israel was God’s vineyard. In the New Testament era, the vine became a recognized symbol of the Messiah. (See Duz for further commentary.)

3. **“You bear much fruit, and in this way my Father is glorified, and you become my disciples”:** When we speak of bearing fruit for God, the “fruit” does not merely refer to evangelism, inviting seekers to the church, or even being rooted solely within the Israelite community or a specific congregation. Rather, it signifies a complete integration into Christ, making Him our leader; it is about internalizing Him in our hearts and exhibiting His character in our words and actions. We must be rooted in Him—and in the process, all that is unclean in our hearts must be removed so we become vessels fit for Him. Those actions that do not please the Lord cannot remain as part of His

“body” and will ultimately be discarded as withered branches. Only those branches that remain united with Christ will bear abundant fruit, reflecting the likeness of Christ.

4. **The Relationship Between the Vine and the Branches:** In the relationship between God and His people, the connection between the vine and the branches is one of complete dependence and continual, abiding union. A branch’s reliance on the vine carries a deeper significance than a sheep depending on its shepherd or a child depending on its father. When Jesus was about to depart from His disciples, He used this image as an exhortation: He would remain united with His disciples, and they with Him, just as the branches remain inseparably attached to the vine.

Brothers and sisters, are you merely committed to the church, or are you truly rooted in Jesus Christ? Are you the branch that remains closely connected to Him, or have you been cast off as a withered branch? Please pray about this.

The Responsibility of the Disciples

It isn't that we can't let go of Weibo or WeChat—it's that we cannot let go of the souls behind the words that resonate with us! We persist in speaking out because we refuse to hand the whole world over to those whom we despise. (—Cheng Lingxu)

Whether these words were indeed spoken by Cheng Lingxu (a reporter, senior journalist, and columnist for *Xiamen Business Daily*) is not as important as the deep impression they have made on me. Lately, I've found some time to write a little, although the volume pales in comparison to the massive amount of content on various platforms. Even so, I seem to have discovered the motivation and reward to continue writing—at least for the few “resonant souls” who still listen.

I searched on Zhihu and, regarding the latter part of sentence 2, two users, “Nan Zihan” and “Chen Guang Chenxi5946,” posted very thoughtful comments. Interested readers can follow the provided links to see their posts. In particular, Nan Zihan wrote, “I will never hand over this world to those I despise,” and “Once, in my youthful arrogance, I wasted a great deal of time, but now, it's time to take back everything that belongs to me.” These two sentences carry deep meaning. Chen Guang Chenxi5946 concluded: “I bring up this example because there are so many people like this in life. When you say with your mouth, ‘I cannot hand the world over to those I despise,’ you should ask yourself: why is it that those you despise can have this world while you cannot? And when you despise others, consider whether, in turn, they despise you even more.” Their thoughts and reflections on “those who are despised” have inspired me, and I would like to share a few words on this topic.

I have been working for over 30 years, and more than half of that time has been spent since I came to know Jesus Christ. Despite having experienced my own “youthful arrogance” and having “wasted a great deal of time,” I still ended up handing over the world—not only to those I despise but also to those who despise me. I did this because I misread many passages of Scripture, even surrendering the interpretation and practice of my faith to the world. Consider the following verse:

“For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matthew 16:26 NKJV)

This verse is Jesus’ declaration of His purpose in coming to this world and a foretelling of His Passion. It serves as a warning to His disciples: unless we are willing to walk the path of death with Him, we may win the entire world, yet ultimately lose everything. (After all, Jesus Himself had the chance to gain the whole world by worshiping Satan—see Luke 4:5–8, *But Jesus answered him, saying, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.’ ” Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, “All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours.” And Jesus answered and said to him, “Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.’ ”* However, by remaining obedient to the Father, He won life and triumphed over Satan.

Those who live before Jesus in such a way are the truly joyful ones from the heart. Dedicating our lives completely to Jesus and living a life centered on others does not diminish our own life—it enriches it. Yet, many people, including many like myself, remain in a “half-hidden” state. In our careers, we often lack the courage to decisively handle conflicts among colleagues and end up handing over the success that should have been ours to someone else.

At the same time, in our spiritual life the focus is too frequently on our own emotions—our anger, joy, sorrow—instead of possessing a determination to live in death and life with Jesus. This very lack of determination gives us excuse after excuse to overlook our own transgressions, leading us to compromise repeatedly in our struggles with the world. Consequently, time and again we are defeated by “those who despise me,” achieving neither worldly success nor spiritual elevation. After several such rounds, our fragile bodies become too weak to contend with the world and end up “handing over” the world to those we despise.

No disciple of Christ wishes to see or receive such an outcome. Jesus' teachings to His disciples are meant for all believers. Regardless of where we stand—whether in the flush of youthful arrogance, in the midst of fragile weakness, or even when facing illness and hardship—we must lift our eyes and look to the Lord at this very moment:

“Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

—Hebrews 12:2 NKJV

From Jesus Christ, we draw our faith.

After many years of work, the greatest regret is not having failed to try, but rather not having endeavored in accordance with Jesus Christ's teachings—failing to cast our burdens of difficulties, anxiety, and worry upon Him before striving; not having examined, repented, and corrected our sins and transgressions before making an effort.

Brothers and sisters, do any of you share a similar feeling? If so, let us fall to our knees before our Heavenly Father in prayer, asking Him to be our lifelong guide, our helper in daily life and work, and a part of our family.

If ever you have the opportunity, please do something for the “souls” mentioned at the very beginning—may more brothers and sisters lay down their heavy burdens and invite Jesus Christ into their lives.

Let us pray together.

Who Should Change?

“Do not try to change an adult unless you have the ability to completely shatter the imprints of an unyielding original family, the lengthy molding of school education, and the overwhelming influence of surrounding social groups. When dealing with adults, you can only choose whether to act or not—you have no power to change them.”

I recently noticed these words shared in my social circle. I had seen similar expressions elsewhere before. Indeed, this statement encapsulates a familiar feeling among adults: the desire to find like-minded partners or friends in this “rough and tumble” society, yet being so guarded and cautious—like two hedgehogs unwilling to open up to each other for fear of being hurt. The expectations instilled by our education and the demands of a harmonious environment stand in stark contrast to the reality of modern society. Every adult, when facing people and situations, must weigh the potential consequences beforehand. Especially in the past half-century of civilization, one must tread very carefully; without certain survival skills, it is all too easy to become a casualty of “social interaction.” Due to our unique and often complex life experiences, each adult gradually develops a distinct persona along with corresponding psychological defense mechanisms. Thus, when Professor Sun speaks of “changing” an adult, in many cases he is referring to a one-sided and futile effort. Being able to correctly decide what to “keep or let go” is already wise—it can at least avoid over 80% of trouble. Today, I want to discuss how to adjust ourselves in such circumstances.

I. The Demands and Influences of Society

We often blame society for these conditions, forgetting that every one of us is an integral part of society. The various requirements of society—including work modes, forms of entertainment, and ways of interacting with others—are actually standards set by individuals and then applied to every family, school, profit-driven organization, etc. For people to truly understand and practice free communication and a joyful life, the key lies not

in whether external circumstances are in harmony but in how we internally understand and change ourselves. By deeply observing our own nature and identifying the hidden self behind our daily choices and actions, we can begin to understand how to create genuine change for ourselves and society without relying solely on external structures. This requires that we go beyond the superficial education and socialization processes—including the deep-rooted family ideologies, the education methods that conflict with real-life, and even the constraints imposed by the broader environment. The real question is: Who is willing to change for this?

That being said, the reason we say that we need to “transcend” what we call the larger societal environment is simple: this society is made up of countless “yous,” “mes,” and “theirs.” It is these countless individuals—with their ambitions, greed, jealousy, violence, corruption, and fear—that have created our society. Therefore, “transcending” actually means that each person must transcend themselves. Those who have been steeped in a long tradition of a unified way of thinking, attempting to achieve goals through various cultural doctrines, religious sects, scientific methods, or even political strategies, inevitably encounter an obstacle—a spring-like barrier—which is human desire. When a person develops a behavioral pattern that others cannot shake, it is not because he is incapable of understanding or hearing external voices; rather, he is unwilling to change because he fears destroying the fruits of his established desires. Thus, when we speak of society’s influence on us, it is better understood as the influence of countless others who do not want you to disrupt the fruits of their desires. When you attempt to change society, or even change another person, you are, in effect, trying to alter the desire outcomes and the resultant mindset that others depend on for their survival. Once you understand this, you can determine both a direction and a method when making choices about what to “keep” or “let go.” You might even conclude: “Isn’t it unnecessary for me to do this?”

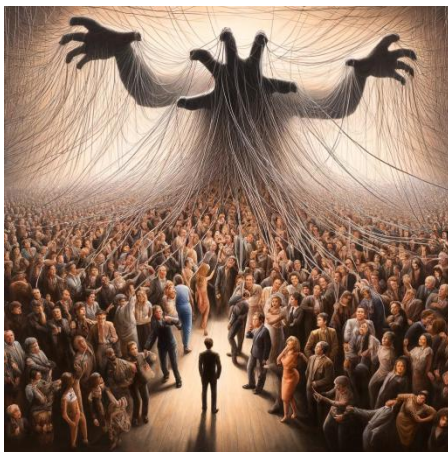


Image Interpretation: The accompanying image depicts the complex interplay between personal desires and societal influences. Every individual's aspirations are entangled within a vast network that represents social norms and expectations, manipulated by the invisible forces of culture, education, and politics symbolized by a looming shadow over them. It illustrates the struggle of an individual trying to find personal freedom within the restrictions imposed by society—a struggle that shows that changing oneself, and by extension the environment, is both arduous and necessary.

II. The Attitude That Disciples Should Have

In addressing or adjusting a person's desires, fields like academia, law, science, politics, and religion offer their own methods and strategies, but I will not elaborate on those here. The broadest summary of social life is called philosophy, and the highest dimension of philosophy is religion—religion being the embodiment of people's faith.

From the perspective of a Christian disciple, societal demands are often closely tied to the material world and individual interests—such as work, consumption, and social activities. However, these demands might conflict with the lifestyle taught by the Bible. Christian disciples are called to pursue higher values such as love, service, and humility, which require us to go beyond self-centered behavior and thinking. True freedom comes from our relationship with God; it is through relying on His grace that we can bring about transformation on both a

personal and societal level. Thus, the challenge for Christian disciples is to find balance between spiritual pursuits and worldly life—to live in a way that mirrors Christ, bringing God’s love into the society in which we live.

Disciples of Christ are a blessed people, yet in this material world they inevitably become integrated with and influenced by it. Sometimes, due to various entanglements, they gradually abandon their faith. Many become confused when they see that people of “other beliefs” sometimes appear to live more comfortably than they do. But, dear brothers and sisters, have you ever considered that regardless of who you are or what material things exist in this world, all are created by God? Everything we do during our time on earth is under His control. As disciples of the Lord, we do not need to be jealous, nor must we labor over how to choose between what to “keep” or “let go.” No matter what difficulties, diseases, or adversities we face, we should always follow the Lord’s lead:

“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the Lord Forever.” (Psalms 23:6 NKJV)

For those mentioned in the opening words of this article, disciples may certainly pray for them, for only the Lord has control over each individual’s desired outcomes.

“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”
—Matthew 6:21 NKJV

Any hardened adult you meet will eventually realize that what they possess will not provide eternal care according to human will. Without the peace provided by the gospel of Christ, one will forever be caught in a cycle of worldly desires.

Brothers and sisters, when our Lord Jesus came into this world, His power and redemption were not meant for us to coldly wrestle with choices of what to “keep” or “let go.” He desires that we know Him, rely on Him, and set our hearts and minds on the goals He calls for. We should ask Him to lead us in living out love and to influence more people to be willing to change for the sake of Christ.

Let us pray together for this.

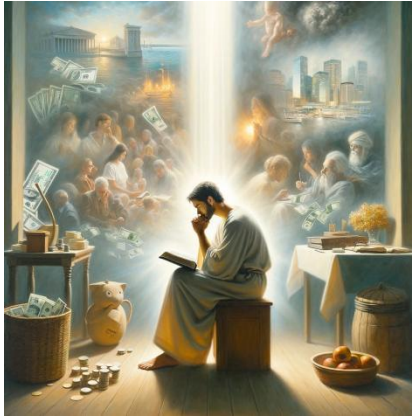


Image Interpretation: The painting depicts a Christian disciple deep in contemplation and prayer, surrounded by symbols of worldly desires and material wealth. The disciple sits in a quiet, simple setting holding a Bible, while blurred images of money, luxury items, and a bustling urban life represent the distractions of the material world. A beam of light shines upon the disciple, symbolizing God's guidance and the spiritual path amidst worldly temptations.

Facing the Priesthood, What Should the Disciples Do?

“But there is one thing I must confess to you: I am serving the God of my forefathers according to what they call a heresy—a teaching that is in keeping with the Law and everything written in the Prophets—and I also have the hope of a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous—just as they themselves have this hope. Therefore, I strive to maintain an unblemished conscience before God and man.” (*Acts 24:14–16, Chinese Union Version*)

The above passage is from AD 58, when the apostle Paul, after being seized by Jewish religious leaders and handed over to the Roman governor Felix, delivered a powerful defense. Facing Felix, the high priest Ananias, several elders, and the advocate Tertullus, Paul boldly expressed his faith and the practice of the “Way” of Christ. This took place about 25 years after Jesus was crucified. Each person present—the Roman governor, the priestly leaders, the elders, and the advocate—had differing attitudes, representing the Roman authorities, the traditional Jewish religious leaders, and those defending the faith. Today, we focus on why the Jewish religious leaders resisted Paul—as they had opposed and persecuted Jesus—and ask: What should the disciples do in such situations?

I. The State of Governance in Jewish Lands Around the Turn of the Era

Roman rule in the Jewish regions began in 63 BC when Pompey the Great occupied Jerusalem. This form of governance continued until AD 135, with the end marked by the Bar Kokhba revolt, lasting nearly 198 years. Initially, Jerusalem was a client kingdom ruled by local leaders such as Herod the Great, appointed by Rome. After AD 6, however, Jerusalem became a directly administered Roman province, governed by Roman officials up until the Bar Kokhba revolt, when Rome dramatically changed its methods of rule and the region’s demographic characteristics.



Image Description: This image portrays a scene based on Acts 24:1–2, where the high priest Ananias, several elders, and the advocate Tertullus are interrogating the apostle Paul before Roman governor Felix. The setting is a lavishly decorated Roman hall.

II. The Concerns of the Jewish Religious Leaders Regarding the Spread of Christianity

In Jewish society of that era, the religious leaders continued to uphold the duties prescribed by Moses' Law. Even under Roman rule, they maintained significant status and authority. In many respects, the obedience expected from the Jewish people under these leaders even aligned with the requirements of Roman authority, resulting in an implicit understanding. The priestly power was built on guiding and controlling the religious life of the people.

When Jesus and His disciples—and later Paul with his gospel—began to spread their message among the Jews, these religious leaders faced a challenge from the new faith. Their concerns arose for several reasons:

1. **Threat to Authority and Influence:** The Christian message differed from traditional Jewish teachings—especially regarding the resurrection and salvation through Jesus Christ. This divergence threatened the established authority of the Jewish leaders as people might shift their allegiance to the new faith, undermining the leaders' control and guidance.

2. **Economic and Social Control:** The leaders depended on the donations and offerings of the people to sustain their lifestyles and religious operations. A decline in the number of adherents would not only weaken their authority but also jeopardize their economic support. Thus, maintaining traditional doctrine was seen as essential to preserving their status.

Consequently, when confronted with the challenge presented by the rising Christian movement, Jewish religious leaders often resorted to harsh measures to defend their interests. Their objective was not only self-preservation but also maintaining the tacit agreement with Roman authorities concerning the control of the populace. They sometimes invoked Roman legal measures to suppress what they deemed heretical teaching—for instance, the advocate Tertullus accused Paul of “inciting all the Jews throughout the world” (Acts 24:5c) and “even defiling the temple” (Acts 24:6a). Such charges were employed to punish and persecute dissenters and to halt missionary activities. For these religious leaders, protecting their privileges and influence was paramount.

Reflecting on the persecution of Jesus by these very leaders, we observe that they regarded His gospel as heresy. During His ministry, Jesus emphasized love, forgiveness, and mercy, as well as a heart-centered approach to the Law—challenging the superficiality of the Pharisees’ adherence. He even quoted Isaiah to criticize the hypocrisy of those who honor Him with their lips while their hearts are far from Him (cf. Mark 7:6, Chinese Union Version).

Jesus’ teaching and miracles drew significant attention, establishing Him as a prominent figure in society. As He declared, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 22:37–40, Chinese Union Version).

In response to these challenges, the religious authorities took a series of measures against Jesus—questioning Him, challenging His views, and ultimately using Roman legal power to arrest, try,

and condemn Him, all in an attempt to stifle His influence and halt His ministry.

III. The Gospel Sown and Widely Disseminated

After the Bar Kokhba revolt of AD 135, Rome implemented strict measures to suppress further Jewish resistance and to cement its control over the region. Emperor Hadrian reorganized the province and enacted significant reforms such as:

- Renaming and rebuilding Jerusalem, along with imposing restrictions on Jewish access (except on days of temple commemoration);
- Banning certain Jewish customs, including circumcision;
- Enhancing Roman colonization, which diluted the influence of the Jewish population.

These actions resulted in major demographic and cultural shifts in the Jewish regions, effectively ending any form of autonomous Jewish rule under the previous Roman system. Despite restrictions imposed on Christian activities in Jerusalem by Hadrian's edicts, the spread of Christianity did not cease. After separating from Judaism, Christianity rapidly expanded throughout the Roman Empire, reaching Asia Minor, Greece, Egypt, and even Rome itself. By the second and third centuries, robust church structures had been established in many Roman cities.

Returning to the scene at the beginning, we can observe how Paul, when facing the combined powers of government and religious authority, spoke with calm determination and a penetrating gaze as if reaching straight into the hearts of everyone present. In that moment, he was not merely defending himself—he was bearing witness to his faith. Paul's three missionary journeys and the contributions of numerous other disciples have immeasurably advanced the cause of Christianity, even when practical worship was thwarted by the renaming of Jerusalem and the inability to worship at the temple site. Paul's example shows that steadfast adherence to truth and faith, even in adversity, can inspire and transform countless lives.

IV. Reflections on Scripture

After Jesus—the Word made flesh—appeared in this world created by our Heavenly Father, He came to bring the Gospel to “you, me, and them.” Although He lived under the oppressive rule of Rome, He still, by the will of the Father and amidst immense trials, spread the Gospel to that land.

In New Testament Greek, the name for Jesus is Ἰησοῦς (Iēsous), which is essentially the same as the Hebrew name (Yehoshua) found in the Old Testament—meaning “Jehovah is salvation.” Imagine that over 1,400 years before Jesus’s coming, Joshua, in accordance with God’s will, received authority from Moses to lead the Israelites into Canaan—a land described as “flowing with milk and honey”—where the body of the people would settle. In a similar yet transcendent manner, Jesus Christ, in obedience to the Father’s will, brings people into a new kind of paradise—eternal life—and exercises the rights and responsibilities of ruling this earth. God blesses them and commands: “Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and every living thing that moves on the earth.” (Genesis 1:28, Chinese Union Version)

Today, because of the Gospel given by Jesus Christ—and through the testimony of Paul and countless other disciples—we have been chosen by God to become inheritors of this new paradise and “rulers” of the present world. No matter which country you live in, regardless of your circumstances, whether you are enduring afflictions or facing challenges from any “high priest,” never forget your identity. Pray for yourself, those you love, and even for those you do not love. Emulate Jesus Christ by adopting a positive attitude in preserving, sharing, and putting the Gospel into practice, never taking for granted the price and promises paid on our behalf.

Brothers and sisters, in the face of challenges from the priestly class and modern society, how do you think we can more effectively witness the love of Christ?

Who Is Serving Mammon?

“No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” —Luke 16:13 NKJV



Some Christians dismiss the above verse as nothing more than an ancient practice of the Jews from 2,000 years ago, believing that such matters do not exist in modern life. Yet in actuality, it is often very difficult to discern whether we are under the control of materialism—Mammon—especially within a cultural soil enriched over thousands of years by Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism. It becomes hard to tell which behaviors are truly about serving Mammon and which are conducted in accordance with God’s teachings. Let us compare the Scriptures and reflect on the matter:

Dear brothers and sisters,

In our everyday lives, the temptations of materialism are ubiquitous. Many Christians, without realizing it, are ruled by materialism. Jesus clearly warned us:

“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” (Matthew 6:24 NKJV)

Today, let us reflect together on how to remain loyal to God in this materialistic world.

1. Recognizing the Essence of Materialism

The Temptation of Materialism: Materialism (or Mammon) is not merely the pursuit of wealth; it is a lifestyle and a set of values that places money, status, and material enjoyment at the center of life. In modern society, materialism seeps into our consciousness through advertising, media, and social

networks—often leading us, almost unknowingly, to equate wealth and success with happiness and self-worth. Many Christians even, while seeking God’s guidance, secretly ponder, “When will I finally get rich?”

The Trap of Materialism: Materialism can result in greed, selfishness, and anxiety, driving us away from God’s teachings. Some may chase material wealth at the expense of family, friendship, and faith—sometimes even resorting to immoral means. In doing so, they may comfort themselves with the thought, “Doesn’t God also bless His children through wealth? Why can’t I have that too?”

2. Distinguishing Behaviors That Serve Mammon

If we spend most of our time and energy pursuing wealth and social status while neglecting family, church, and our personal spiritual growth, we are, in effect, serving Mammon. For example, in the quest for a promotion or to earn more money, we might sacrifice family time, skip church services, or even neglect daily prayer and Bible reading. Even when we obtain “unrighteous wealth,” a sense of anxiety and guilt may fill our hearts, gradually steering us down Satan’s path.

On Comparison and Consumerism: Materialism pushes us to constantly compare—buying the latest smartphones, cars, or houses as a way to gain status and validation. Yet, once the fleeting satisfaction fades, it leaves behind an emptiness that nothing can fill—especially not the void left by distancing ourselves from God’s word.

Neglecting Spiritual Growth: When we notice that we increasingly avoid church activities, that our prayer and Bible study have waned as we devote more time to work, shopping, and entertainment, it is likely a sign that materialism has taken hold of us—bringing us dangerously close to the lure of Satan.

3. Maintaining the Purity of Faith Amid a Confucian–Buddhist–Taoist Culture

Integrate and Extract the Essence: Within Confucian, Buddhist, and Taoist traditions lie many admirable qualities—such as Confucian benevolence, Taoist simplicity, and Buddhist compassion—that can help us better understand and live out Christian doctrine. We can draw on this wisdom to return to a

life characterized by simplicity, frugality, and introspection, avoiding the enslavement of materialism.

Strengthen the Foundation of Your Faith: In everyday life, it is crucial to reinforce your spiritual foundation. Engage in daily prayer, Bible reading, and active participation in church activities to continually remind yourself that God is your one and only Master. For instance, spending time each morning reading Scripture and praying for wisdom and strength can help you make right and godly decisions throughout the day.

4. Practicing God's Teachings

Gratitude and Contentment: Cultivate a heart of gratitude and cherish all that God has given you. When we learn to be thankful and content, we are less likely to fall prey to materialistic temptations. For example, your daily prayers might begin with thanking God for His blessings and grace.

Loving and Serving Others: By caring for and serving others, you can break free from selfishness and greed, experiencing the true love and joy of God. Engage in church outreach programs, visit community members in need, and share your time and resources generously.

Simplify Your Life and Return to Its Essence: Opt for a simple yet meaningful lifestyle that reduces dependence on material possessions. Simplifying life allows you to focus more fully on your faith and inner peace. Consider periodically decluttering your home, donating unnecessary items, and resisting the urge for excessive consumption.

Conclusion

Dear brothers and sisters, may we remain vigilant and self-reflective in this era where materialism prevails. Let us recognize that we are caught in the net of capital and deeply influenced by Confucian, Buddhist, and Taoist cultural norms. In response, we must steadfastly rely on the Lord to find ways to maintain our Christian faith. In doing so, we pursue true peace and fulfillment. May God's love and peace always be with us, guiding us on His righteous path.

May God bless each one of us! Let us come together in prayer for this cause.

The Confusions and Causes of Collective Versus Individual, Rights Versus Obedience Over the Past 70 Years



Over the past 70 years, two periods seem to share certain connections and similarities—namely, (1966–1976) and (2020–2023). In these periods, there appears to be a gradual unfolding: the higher echelons with certain rights increasingly impose a “collective” will from above, while at lower levels the individual will gradually disappears. Possible reasons include the following:

1. The Impact of Various “Collective Activities”

Examples: The Cultural Revolution and the COVID-19 pandemic control measures caused persecution and suffering for many people.

2. The Transformation Due to Economic Reforms

Reform and Opening-up: While the reform and opening-up policies spurred rapid economic development, they also exacerbated social inequality and unjust distribution of rights. Even as individuals enjoyed the economic benefits, they faced challenges such as unemployment, environmental pollution, and inadequate social security.

3. Challenges of Modern Society

The Internet Age: The development of the internet has made information more open and increased opportunities for personal expression, but it has also brought about stricter controls over

“inappropriate” speech and an increased emphasis on collective interests. Ordinary people in China—both online and offline—continue to struggle in balancing personal rights and obedience to collective expectations.

Reluctance to Think Independently and to Bear Responsibility for Outcomes

1. Influence of the Education System:

Dogmatic Education: The long-standing emphasis on rote learning in our education system has neglected the cultivation of critical thinking and independent thought.

2. Influence of Social Culture:

Collectivist Culture: A collectivist culture highlights obedience and unity, and does little to encourage individual independent thinking or risk-taking.

3. Atmosphere of Expression:

Strict Speech Controls: Rigid controls on public expression foster a fear of expressing differing opinions or accepting responsibility for the outcomes of one’s words.

Proposed Methods for Improvement

1. Enhance Civic Awareness

- **Education and Self-Education:** By reading, studying history and sociology, and learning about the importance of democracy, freedom, and human rights, individuals can better recognize their own rights.

2. Participate in Public Affairs

- **Community Activities and Volunteer Service:** Engaging in community activities fosters civic responsibility and public awareness, enhancing one’s involvement in societal affairs.

3. Improve Critical Thinking Skills

- **Independent Thought and Information Discrimination:** Learning to think independently and scrutinize information helps avoid blind obedience and partial listening.

4. Encourage Independent Thinking

- **Open-Ended Education:** Employ educational methods that encourage children to ask questions and think independently, thus cultivating critical thinking skills.

5. Cultivate a Democratic Consciousness

- **Family Democracy:** Implement democratic decision-making in the household by involving children in discussions and decisions, fostering their democratic awareness and sense of responsibility.

6. Respect for Individual Rights: Respect children's choices and interests without forcing them to accept the parents' views, allowing them to experience the rights and responsibilities of free choice.

7. Broaden International Perspective

- **Cross-Cultural Exchange:** Through study abroad programs, international summer camps, and other means, children can be exposed to different cultures and value systems. This exposure broadens their horizons and deepens their understanding of pluralism and democratic freedom.

Become a Model for Society

- **Lead by Example:** Practice the values of democracy and freedom in daily life to serve as a role model for children and others.
- **Promote Social Progress:** Voice your opinions through legal channels, defend your rights and the rights of others, and help drive social progress and transformation.
- **Educate Others:** Spread the ideals through teaching and communication so that more people understand the importance of democracy, freedom, and human rights, thereby promoting collective societal development and progress.

Conclusion

By enhancing civic awareness, improving critical thinking, encouraging independent thought, and respecting individual rights, we can help awaken people—and in educating the next generation, cultivate individuals with a joyful and free spirit. Such efforts can serve as a model for society. Only through continuous education and practice can we gradually achieve a balance between individual rights and collective interests, thereby constructing a more free and democratic society.

Christian Biblical Exegesis of Key Terms in Judaism, Catholicism, Islam, and Confucianism/Buddhism/Taoism

This study selects key terms from the spiritual practices of Judaism, Catholicism, Islam, Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism or Daoism, providing interpretations through the lens of Christian biblical exegesis to facilitate cross-religious understanding.

Judaism



Torah (Law):

Explanation: The Torah is the core scripture of Judaism (primarily the Five Books of Moses), which guides Jewish faith and daily life.

Biblical Interpretation (Christian Perspective): Christianity teaches that Jesus fulfills the Law; while the Old Testament law remains as a moral guideline, salvation comes through grace and faith in Christ rather than by merely following the law.

Mitzvot (Commandments):

Explanation: Mitzvot refer to the 613 commandments that govern nearly every aspect of Jewish life.

Biblical Interpretation: Christianity emphasizes that faith in Jesus is the key to salvation rather than strict adherence to a multitude of laws and commandments.

Shabbat (Sabbath):

Explanation: The Sabbath is a weekly day of rest and worship in obedience to God's command.

Biblical Interpretation: Christians see the Sabbath as a foreshadowing of the rest found in Christ—emphasizing freedom in Him rather than a rigid observance of one specific day.

Kosher (Dietary Laws):

Explanation: Kosher regulations dictate which foods may be eaten and how they must be prepared.

Biblical Interpretation: In Christ, all foods are considered clean; the dietary restrictions of the Old Testament are no longer binding on believers.

Tefillin (Phylacteries):

Explanation: Tefillin are leather boxes containing biblical passages worn during prayer as reminders to obey the law.

Biblical Interpretation: Christianity stresses that faith should be an internal matter—a personal, heart-centered relationship with God—rather than a matter of outward rituals and symbols.

Tzedakah (Charity):

Explanation: Tzedakah involves acts of righteousness— giving charity and helping those in need.

Biblical Interpretation: While charity is also important in Christianity, it is understood as the fruit of faith rather than a transactional means to gain God’s favor.

Shema (The Shema Prayer):

Explanation: The Shema is a central declaration of the Jewish faith, affirming the oneness of God.

Biblical Interpretation: Christians also highly value worship of God, though they emphasize the relationship with God through Jesus Christ as the ultimate expression of that faith.

Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement):

Explanation: Yom Kippur is the annual day of atonement in which Jews engage in repentance and seek forgiveness.

Biblical Interpretation: Christians believe that the sacrifice of Jesus once and for all secures atonement for sins, eliminating the need for an annual atonement ritual.

Halacha (Jewish Law):

Explanation: Halacha is the comprehensive system of Jewish law governing daily conduct and religious rituals.

Biblical Interpretation: Christianity views the Old Testament law as a shadow of things to come, with Christ being the

substance—emphasizing a new life in Him rather than strict adherence to the old legal codes.

Bar/Bat Mitzvah (Coming-of-Age Ceremony):

Explanation: This ceremony marks the transition of Jewish youth into religious and moral responsibility.

Biblical Interpretation: Christianity does not have an equivalent ritual; it emphasizes personal faith and repentance as the basis for one's relationship with God, irrespective of age or ceremonial milestones.

Kabbalah (Jewish Mysticism):

Explanation: Kabbalah is a mystical tradition that seeks to explain the relationship between God, the universe, and humanity.

Biblical Interpretation: Christianity is generally cautious about mystical approaches, emphasizing that God's revelation is made clear through the Bible rather than through secret or esoteric knowledge.

Mezuzah (Doorpost Scroll):

Explanation: A Mezuzah is a small case affixed to doorposts, containing biblical texts as a reminder of God's presence.

Biblical Interpretation: Christians emphasize that true faith is internal and that one's heart—not external symbols—should be the dwelling place for God.

Catholicism



Eucharist (Holy Communion):

Explanation: The Eucharist is the central rite of the Catholic

Mass, in which the bread and wine are believed to become the actual body and blood of Christ.

Biblical Interpretation: While many Christians regard Holy Communion as a memorial of Christ's sacrifice, most non-Catholic denominations do not hold that the elements literally transform, but rather symbolize Christ's body and blood.

Mary (The Blessed Virgin):

Explanation: Catholics hold Mary in high esteem, believing in her immaculate conception and her role as an intercessor in heaven.

Biblical Interpretation: Other Christian traditions respect Mary as the mother of Jesus but do not attribute to her the doctrines of immaculate conception or a mediating role, emphasizing that Christ is the sole mediator between God and man.

Veneration of Saints:

Explanation: Catholics practice the veneration of saints by praying for their intercession.

Biblical Interpretation: Many Protestants and other Christian groups teach that believers should pray only to God, rejecting any form of saint veneration.

Confession (Sacrament of Reconciliation):

Explanation: In confession, Catholics confess sins to a priest, who then grants absolution in Jesus' name.

Biblical Interpretation: Other Christian traditions stress direct confession to God without the necessity of an intermediary priest.

Purgatory:

Explanation: Catholic doctrine teaches that purgatory is a temporary state in which souls are purified before entering heaven.

Biblical Interpretation: Most other Christian denominations reject the concept of purgatory, holding that salvation and forgiveness are fully granted in this life through faith, with the soul facing immediate judgment upon death.

Rosary:

Explanation: The Rosary is a form of meditative prayer involving repetitive recitation of prayers, primarily in honor of Mary.

Biblical Interpretation: Many other Christians believe that such repetitive prayer practices do not align with biblical instruction, advocating instead for direct, personal conversation with God.

Sacramentals:

Explanation: Sacramentals include items such as holy water and religious images, which are believed to carry divine blessing and power.

Biblical Interpretation: Other Christian groups do not ascribe inherent sanctity to objects, believing that blessing and salvation come solely from God.

Pilgrimage:

Explanation: Pilgrimage refers to religious journeys to sacred places (e.g., Rome or Jerusalem).

Biblical Interpretation: While pilgrimage can be valuable, most non-Catholic Christians do not view it as a religious obligation, teaching instead that true worship of God occurs wherever one may be.

Liturgy (Formal Worship Services):

Explanation: Catholic worship places great emphasis on formal liturgical ceremonies and the sacraments as the center of worship.

Biblical Interpretation: Many other Christian traditions focus on heart-felt, personal worship rather than adhering strictly to formal rites.

Celibacy:

Explanation: Catholic doctrine requires that clergy remain celibate in order to devote themselves entirely to God's service.

Biblical Interpretation: Most Protestant denominations allow clergy to marry, viewing marriage as a blessing rather than a barrier to effective ministry.

Sacraments:

Explanation: Catholics recognize seven sacraments (Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Marriage).

Biblical Interpretation: Many non-Catholic churches typically recognize only Baptism and the Lord's Supper as sacraments, arguing that the other rites lack clear biblical sanction.

Holy Oil:

Explanation: Holy oil is used in the sacrament of anointing the sick, believed to convey healing and forgiveness.

Biblical Interpretation: Other Christian traditions contend that prayer and faith are the primary means of healing, and do not assign special sacramental power to anointing oil.

Islam



Shahada (Declaration of Faith):

Explanation: The Shahada is the Islamic testimony: “There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is His messenger.”

Biblical Interpretation: Christianity teaches a Trinitarian view of God, affirming that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and Savior—thus rejecting a solely monotheistic declaration that omits Christ and affirms Muhammad as the final messenger.

Salah (Prayer):

Explanation: Salah is the practice of praying five times a day while facing Mecca.

Biblical Interpretation: Christianity encourages believers to pray at all times and in all places, emphasizing a personal and ongoing relationship with God unconstrained by fixed times or directions.

Sawm (Fasting):

Explanation: Sawm refers to the fasting observed during the month of Ramadan, from dawn to sunset.

Biblical Interpretation: While Christians also practice fasting at times, it is not viewed as a requirement for salvation but as a means of sincere repentance and spiritual focus.

Zakat (Almsgiving):

Explanation: Zakat is the compulsory giving of 2.5% of one's wealth to those in need.

Biblical Interpretation: Christian teachings stress voluntary generosity and charitable giving that flows from genuine love and compassion, rather than a fixed mandatory amount.

Hajj (Pilgrimage):

Explanation: Hajj is the pilgrimage to Mecca that every Muslim must undertake at least once in their lifetime.

Biblical Interpretation: Christianity holds that worship of God does not require visiting a particular sacred location, for God is present everywhere and can be encountered in every place.

Jihad (Struggle/Striving):

Explanation: Jihad can broadly refer to striving for the sake of faith, though in its narrow sense it may denote armed struggle.

Biblical Interpretation: Christianity advocates for love and peace, emphasizing a spiritual battle against sin rather than physical conflict.

Qur'an (Holy Book):

Explanation: The Qur'an is the Islamic holy book, regarded as the literal revelation of Allah.

Biblical Interpretation: Christianity holds that the Bible is the sole divinely inspired scripture and does not recognize the Qur'an as a part of God's revelation.

Halal (Permissible):

Explanation: Halal refers to that which is permissible under Islamic law, especially with regard to food and behavior.

Biblical Interpretation: Christianity does not observe a strict set of dietary laws, emphasizing instead the purity of the heart over external regulations.

Imam (Religious Leader):

Explanation: An Imam is a leader in the Islamic faith who presides over prayers and religious affairs.

Biblical Interpretation: Christianity teaches that every believer has direct access to God through Christ and does not require an appointed intermediary for prayer.

Five Pillars of Islam:

Explanation: These are the five basic acts of worship and the foundation of Muslim life: the declaration of faith (Shahada), prayer (Salah), fasting (Sawm), almsgiving (Zakat), and pilgrimage (Hajj).

Biblical Interpretation: Christian doctrine emphasizes salvation through faith in Christ and adherence to biblical teachings rather than adherence to a fixed set of prescribed rituals.

Wudu (Ablution):

Explanation: Wudu is the ritual washing performed before prayers.

Biblical Interpretation: Christianity places greater importance on the cleansing of the soul through Jesus' forgiveness rather than on physical washing.

Eid al-Fitr (Festival of Breaking the Fast):

Explanation: Eid al-Fitr is the celebration marking the end of Ramadan.

Biblical Interpretation: Christianity celebrates major feasts such as Easter and Christmas, which focus on the resurrection and the birth of Jesus, respectively.

Eid al-Adha (Festival of Sacrifice):

Explanation: Eid al-Adha commemorates the willingness of Abraham to sacrifice his son.

Biblical Interpretation: While Christianity honors Abraham's faith, it emphasizes that Jesus is the final and ultimate sacrifice.

Talim (Religious Education):

Explanation: Talim refers to the religious instruction and learning in Islam.

Biblical Interpretation: Christianity also values religious education, focusing particularly on the study of the Bible as the definitive source of God's revelation.

Confucianism



Ren (仁 – Benevolence):

- **Explanation:** Ren is at the heart of Confucianism; it refers to the love and care between people.
- **Biblical Interpretation:** Christianity teaches that love comes from God. Love for others is based on the love for God—not merely the result of self-cultivation.

Li (礼 – Propriety):

- **Explanation:** Li refers to proper rites and etiquette, serving as the guidelines that maintain social order.
- **Biblical Interpretation:** Christianity emphasizes inner honesty and faith rather than mere external rituals or formalities.

Yi (义 – Righteousness):

- **Explanation:** Yi means justice and fairness, with an emphasis on moral integrity and uprightness.
- **Biblical Interpretation:** Christianity holds that true righteousness comes from God and is not merely achieved through personal moral cultivation.

Zhi (智 – Wisdom):

- **Explanation:** Zhi denotes wisdom, particularly the understanding of morality and ethics.
- **Biblical Interpretation:** Christian wisdom is understood to flow from the Scriptures and God's revelation rather than from human philosophical reasoning alone.

Xin (信 – Faith/Integrity):

- **Explanation:** Xin stands for trust, faithfulness, and mutual confidence between people.
- **Biblical Interpretation:** In Christianity, the foundation of faith is trust in God—not solely interpersonal trust.

Xiao (孝 – Filial Piety):

- **Explanation:** Xiao means respecting and caring for one's parents and elders.
- **Biblical Interpretation:** While Christianity also emphasizes honoring one's parents, it places even greater importance on obedience to and reverence for God.

Zhong (忠 – Loyalty):

- **Explanation:** Zhong refers to loyalty toward the state or ruler.
- **Biblical Interpretation:** Christianity teaches that our primary loyalty must be to God, and only thereafter to earthly authorities.

Self-Cultivation (修身):

- **Explanation:** This means cultivating one's character and moral quality through personal effort.
- **Biblical Interpretation:** Christianity asserts that true transformation comes through the work of the Holy Spirit rather than by human effort alone.

Regulating the Family (齐家):

- **Explanation:** This refers to managing one's household well as a means to create a harmonious society.
- **Biblical Interpretation:** Christianity views family harmony as rooted in a relationship with and obedience to God, not merely through parental governance.

Governing the State (治国):

- **Explanation:** Governing the state involves managing the country in a way that brings about overall peace and order.
- **Biblical Interpretation:** Christianity emphasizes the Kingdom of God; when governing, earthly rulers are expected to follow God's righteousness and law.

Bringing Peace to the World (平天下):

- **Explanation:** This means, through personal cultivation and good governance, ultimately realizing world peace.
- **Biblical Interpretation:** Christianity teaches that true peace comes from Christ's peace, not solely from human efforts.

Doctrine of the Mean (中庸):

- **Explanation:** The Doctrine of the Mean stresses balance and moderation and is a key practical principle in Confucian thought.

- **Biblical Interpretation:** Christianity emphasizes steadfastness in truth and faith rather than striving for a mere middle ground.

Investigation of Things to Extend Knowledge (格物致知):

- **Explanation:** This means studying matters in-depth to gain knowledge and wisdom.

- **Biblical Interpretation:** In Christianity, knowledge and wisdom are believed to come from God's revelation rather than from human inquiry alone.

Sincerity (诚意):

- **Explanation:** Sincerity refers to the genuineness and honesty of one's heart.

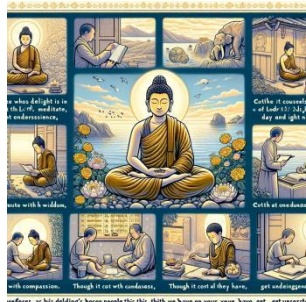
- **Biblical Interpretation:** Christianity teaches that the purity of one's heart comes from a relationship with God, not solely through self-improvement.

Rectifying the Heart (正心):

- **Explanation:** This means bringing the heart into proper order so that one's outward actions are righteous.

- **Biblical Interpretation:** Christianity holds that inner transformation is the work of the Holy Spirit rather than a product of self-discipline alone.

Buddhism



Nirvana (涅槃):

- **Explanation:** Nirvana is the state of ultimate liberation, the complete release from the cycle of birth and rebirth.

- **Biblical Interpretation:** Christianity emphasizes eternal life and heaven through salvation in Christ, rather than achieving liberation through personal ascetic practice.

Karma (业力):

- **Explanation:** Karma refers to the law of cause and effect, where one's actions determine future outcomes.
- **Biblical Interpretation:** Christianity teaches that destiny is governed by God's sovereign grace rather than by the accumulation of personal deeds.

Reincarnation (轮回):

- **Explanation:** Reincarnation is the belief that the soul repeatedly takes on new lives.
- **Biblical Interpretation:** Christianity rejects reincarnation, emphasizing one life followed by judgment and either eternal life or eternal punishment.

Eightfold Path (八正道):

- **Explanation:** The Eightfold Path outlines eight aspects of Buddhist practice, including right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.
- **Biblical Interpretation:** In Christianity, redemption comes through faith and grace, not by following a prescribed set of behavioral guidelines to attain salvation.

Four Noble Truths (四圣谛):

- **Explanation:** These truths explain the nature of suffering, its origin, cessation, and the path to its cessation.
- **Biblical Interpretation:** Christianity teaches that suffering originates from sin and that deliverance is available through Christ's redemptive work, not merely by understanding or eliminating desire.

Bodhicitta (菩提心):

- **Explanation:** Bodhicitta is the aspiration to achieve Buddhahood for the benefit of all beings.
- **Biblical Interpretation:** Christianity emphasizes that grace is received through faith in Christ, not by aspiring to become enlightened to save all beings.

Meditation (禅定):

- **Explanation:** Meditation in Buddhism refers to deep, concentrated contemplation aimed at achieving inner peace and insight.

- **Biblical Interpretation:** While Christianity values prayer and contemplation of God's Word, its focus is on direct communication with God rather than merely internal self-observation.

Compassion (慈悲):

- **Explanation:** Compassion in Buddhism is the unconditional love and empathy extended to all beings.

- **Biblical Interpretation:** Christianity also emphasizes compassion, basing it on God's love and the commandment to love one another, rather than through self-cultivated virtue.

Impermanence (无常):

- **Explanation:** Impermanence is the notion that all things are temporary and subject to change.

- **Biblical Interpretation:** Christianity acknowledges the fleeting nature of worldly things but stresses the eternal nature of God and the everlasting life of the soul.

Five Precepts (五戒):

- **Explanation:** The Five Precepts are basic ethical guidelines in Buddhism: to abstain from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and intoxication.

- **Biblical Interpretation:** Christianity emphasizes the Ten Commandments and obedience to God rather than a fixed set of precepts to perfect personal morality.

Emptiness (空性):

- **Explanation:** Emptiness is the concept that all things lack an independent, permanent essence.

- **Biblical Interpretation:** Christianity teaches the reality of God's creation and the enduring nature of God rather than asserting that everything is inherently empty.

Mindfulness (正念):

- **Explanation:** Mindfulness means remaining aware and attentive to every moment.

- **Biblical Interpretation:** Christianity places more emphasis on spiritual watchfulness and prayer rather than on mindfulness practices per se.

Self-nature (自性):

- **Explanation:** Self-nature is the inherent Buddha-nature present in all beings.
- **Biblical Interpretation:** Christianity teaches that all humans are born with a sinful nature due to original sin and require redemption through Christ rather than discovering an inherent enlightened nature.

Prajna (般若):

- **Explanation:** Prajna represents transcendent wisdom beyond worldly concerns.
- **Biblical Interpretation:** In Christianity, wisdom is viewed as coming from God's revelation in the Bible rather than through esoteric spiritual practice.

Five Aggregates (五蕴):

- **Explanation:** These refer to the five components of personal existence—form, sensation, perception, mental formations, and consciousness.
- **Biblical Interpretation:** Christianity does not typically analyze human nature by breaking it into components; instead, it emphasizes understanding oneself and God through one's relationship with Christ.

Twelve Links of Dependent Origination (十二因缘):

- **Explanation:** This teaching outlines the twelve causal links that explain the cycle of rebirth and the origin of suffering in Buddhism.
- **Biblical Interpretation:** Christianity posits that the purpose of life and the path to deliverance lie in a relationship with God, not in a cyclical process of cause and effect.

No-Self (无我):

- **Explanation:** No-self is the doctrine that there is no permanent, unchanging self.
- **Biblical Interpretation:** Christianity asserts that each person is a unique creation of God with an individual soul, rather than having no fixed identity.

Liberation (解脱):

- **Explanation:** Liberation refers to the ultimate goal of breaking free from the cycle of rebirth and suffering.

- **Biblical Interpretation:** In Christianity, liberation (or salvation) is achieved through the redemptive work of Christ—not through personal effort in self-cultivation.

Dhyana (禅那):

- **Explanation:** Dhyana is a state of deep, focused meditation that leads to tranquility.
- **Biblical Interpretation:** While Christianity values meditating on God’s Word in prayer, it does not employ dhyana as a means to achieve inner concentration.

Right View (正见):

- **Explanation:** In Buddhism, right view involves understanding the Four Noble Truths and the law of karma correctly.
- **Biblical Interpretation:** Christianity’s proper perspective is derived from the teachings of Scripture and divine revelation rather than from an analysis of suffering and karma.

Six Paramitas (六波罗蜜):

- **Explanation:** The Six Paramitas are six qualities that one should cultivate: generosity, ethical conduct, patience, effort, meditation, and wisdom.
- **Biblical Interpretation:** Christianity teaches that good works flow from love for God and others rather than being a means to earn merit through self-cultivation.

Right Speech (正语):

- **Explanation:** This calls for truthful, non-harmful, and proper speech.
- **Biblical Interpretation:** Christianity emphasizes speaking out of love for others rather than adhering to a formulaic “right speech” designed solely for self- purification.

Right Action (正业):

- **Explanation:** This means acting righteously— avoiding killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct.
- **Biblical Interpretation:** Christian ethical conduct is based on God’s commandments and the teachings of Christ, not merely on following a prescribed set of moral exercises.

Right Livelihood (正命):

- **Explanation:** Choosing an occupation that does not harm others is the goal of right livelihood.

- **Biblical Interpretation:** Christianity teaches that one's work should honor God and serve others, rather than being driven solely by the need for material gain.

Right Effort (正精进):

- **Explanation:** This involves diligently avoiding unwholesome behavior and cultivating wholesome habits.
- **Biblical Interpretation:** Christianity relies on the power of the Holy Spirit for transformation rather than on sheer human effort alone.

Right Mindfulness (正念):

- **Explanation:** Maintaining awareness of the present moment is the essence of right mindfulness.
- **Biblical Interpretation:** In Christianity, continuous spiritual alertness and prayer under God's guidance are emphasized over techniques of self-aware mindfulness.

Right Concentration (正定):

- **Explanation:** This is the practice of achieving deep concentration through meditation.
- **Biblical Interpretation:** Christian focus is attained through prayer and meditation on God's word, not by following specific techniques for concentrating the mind.

Ten Virtues (十善):

- **Explanation:** These encompass ten kinds of righteous acts, such as not killing, not stealing, and avoiding sexual misconduct.
- **Biblical Interpretation:** Christianity upholds a harmonious integration of faith and good works, rooted in God's commandments, rather than merely practicing a set number of virtues to accrue merit.

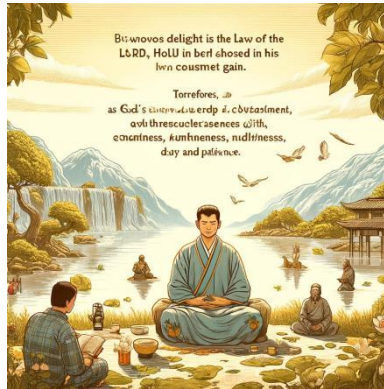
Three Jewels (三宝):

- **Explanation:** In Buddhism, the Three Jewels refer to the Buddha, the Dharma (teaching), and the Sangha (community), which serve as objects of refuge.
- **Biblical Interpretation:** Christianity centers on the triune God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) rather than on the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha as objects of refuge.

Three Trainings (三学):

- **Explanation:** The Three Trainings are the practices of discipline (戒), concentration (定), and wisdom (慧).
- **Biblical Interpretation:** Christianity emphasizes salvation through faith in Christ rather than obtaining liberation through the structured practices of discipline, concentration, and wisdom.

Taoism



Tao (道 – The Way):

- **Explanation:** Tao is the ultimate principle of the universe and the origin of all things.
- **Biblical Interpretation:** Christianity holds that the one ultimate principle is God, not an abstract “Tao.”

Wu Wei (无为 – Non-Action/Non-Interference):

- **Explanation:** Wu Wei refers to the principle of aligning with the natural order and refraining from forced action.
- **Biblical Interpretation:** Christianity teaches proactive goodness and service to God, rather than a passive “non-action” attitude.

Qi (气 – Vital Energy):

- **Explanation:** Qi is the life energy believed to permeate all living things.
- **Biblical Interpretation:** Christianity does not recognize the concept of Qi, maintaining that life originates from God’s creative power.

Yin-Yang (阴阳):

- **Explanation:** Yin and Yang represent two complementary and opposing forces in the universe that are in constant interplay.
- **Biblical Interpretation:** Christianity emphasizes the absolute sovereignty of God without resorting to a dualistic concept of opposing forces.

Inner Alchemy (内丹):

- **Explanation:** Inner alchemy is the Daoist practice of refining one's inner energy to achieve immortality and spiritual enlightenment.
- **Biblical Interpretation:** Christianity teaches that eternal life is granted through faith in Christ rather than through alchemical practices.

Transforming Qi into Spirit (炼气化神):

- **Explanation:** This refers to the process of converting life energy (Qi) into spiritual power through specific exercises and meditation.
- **Biblical Interpretation:** Christianity emphasizes prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit rather than inward energy transformation.

Meditation (静坐):

- **Explanation:** Meditation in Daoism is the practice of sitting quietly to cultivate inner peace and spiritual upliftment.
- **Biblical Interpretation:** While Christianity values meditating on God's word as a form of prayer, it is not primarily an inward self-inspection but rather a conversation with God.

Immortality (长生):

- **Explanation:** Immortality refers to the Daoist goal of achieving endless life through cultivation and practice.
- **Biblical Interpretation:** Christianity teaches that eternal life is received through salvation in Christ—not by one's own efforts at cultivation.

Tao Te Ching (道德经):

- **Explanation:** The Tao Te Ching is a foundational Daoist text that expounds on the relationship between the Tao and virtue (Te) and outlines the path of practice.

- **Biblical Interpretation:** Christianity regards the Bible as the sole divinely inspired revelation and does not accept other religious classics as equal in authority.

Unity of Heaven and Man (天人合一):

- **Explanation:** This concept describes the harmonious union of humans with nature and the universe.
- **Biblical Interpretation:** Christianity emphasizes the relationship between humanity and God rather than a complete union with nature.

Talismans (符篆):

- **Explanation:** Talismans are written symbols or charms used in Daoist practice to ward off evil and ensure good fortune.
- **Biblical Interpretation:** Christianity teaches that one should rely on God's protection rather than on amulets or charms.

Contemplation (静观):

- **Explanation:** Contemplation in Daoism is the practice of observing nature and the changing cosmos to gain understanding of the Tao.
- **Biblical Interpretation:** Christianity stresses understanding God's will through prayer and meditation on Scripture, not by mere observation of nature.

Metaphysics (玄学):

- **Explanation:** Metaphysics in Daoism is the investigation into the fundamental nature of reality and existence.
- **Biblical Interpretation:** Christianity holds that all truth is revealed in the Bible, where God has disclosed the essential truths of reality.

Immortal Cultivation (修仙):

- **Explanation:** Immortal cultivation is the Daoist pursuit of achieving a transcendent state akin to that of an immortal being.
- **Biblical Interpretation:** Christianity teaches that the ultimate destiny of human beings is either eternal life in heaven or eternal separation from God, not a state of becoming an "immortal."

Fasting (斋戒):

- **Explanation:** Fasting in Daoism is practiced to purify the body and mind.

- **Biblical Interpretation:** Christianity also practices fasting, but its purpose is to deepen worship and reliance on God rather than merely to purify oneself.

Note: These interpretations are offered from a Christian perspective for the purpose of comparative study. They summarize how key terms in Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism are understood in contrast with Christian biblical teachings. If there are any points that require further clarification or adjustments, please feel free to point them out.

How to Effectively Present the Gospel Message for People to Benefit

Among Christians, a small number will share articles or inspirational quotes they see on social media; this is good. However, there is a problem: everyone understands and interprets these messages in different ways. How can we share our experiences so that our understanding is conveyed clearly? In other words, how should brothers and sisters in Christ present their lives and testimonies on social media and in everyday life?

1. Understand the Diversity of Information

Each person has unique backgrounds, experiences, and levels of understanding, so interpretations of the gospel message will vary. Before sharing, identify the core of the message and think about how to express it in a simple, easily understandable manner.

2. Use Personal Testimony to Convey the Gospel

Frequently share how the gospel has personally benefited you. Authentic testimony touches hearts and can resonate and spark interest far more than isolated “golden quotes” without life experience—which, if detached from true spiritual fruitfulness, often appear as transient or even as “religious gimmicks” that rarely contribute to genuine growth.

3. Combine with Practical Application

Explain how the gospel message applies to everyday life. For example, describe how faith provided strength and guidance when facing challenges, difficulties, or making important decisions.

4. Emphasize Interaction and Communication

Invite others to ask questions and share their views. Through genuine interaction, you can explore the gospel message in greater depth and clear up any misunderstandings.

5. Use a Variety of Media

Use text, images, videos, and other forms of media to share your message. Modern social platforms offer many engaging tools that can help attract attention and foster better understanding.

6. Maintain Humility and Respect

Respect the faith and opinions of others. Do not force acceptance of your views; instead, provide an open platform for discussion.

A humble and gentle attitude is much more likely to earn others' recognition and understanding.

7. Continue Learning and Growing

Keep learning and deepening your understanding of the gospel so that you can improve your ability to express it and add depth to the content you share. Exchange ideas with other believers to gain more sharing skills and insights.

Example of Sharing

Suppose you read an article about "Trusting God in Difficult Times." When sharing, you might:

- **Summarize the Core Message:** "I recently read an article about the importance of trusting God in difficulties."
- **Share Your Testimony:** "I once experienced a career low when, through prayer and trusting God, I regained strength."
- **Offer a Practical Application:** "No matter what challenge we face, we can always seek God's guidance through prayer."
- **Invite Interaction:** "Have you experienced something similar? Would you like to share your story?"

By following these methods, you can more effectively transmit the gospel message and help more people benefit from it.

Encouraging Independent Thinking and the Willingness to Bear Responsibility

I. Cultivate Independent Thinking

- **Encourage Exploration:** While sharing the gospel, don't just deliver the message—encourage your listeners to explore and think for themselves. Recommend related books and Bible passages for further reading, and invite them to interpret these messages on their own.

II. Demonstrate How to Take Responsibility

- **Share Personal Examples:** Tell people that faith is not only about spiritual fulfillment but also about taking responsibility for one's actions. Share how, under the guidance of faith, you made decisions and accepted their outcomes.

III. Provide Support and Encouragement

- **Offer Help in Tough Times:** When someone faces trials or doubts, extend encouragement and support. Advise them to pray and rely on God's guidance to overcome difficulties, thereby

helping build their confidence and readiness to accept responsibility.

Application in Children's Education

1. Encourage Free Expression

- **Foster Expression:** From an early age, encourage children to share their ideas and ask questions. Cultivate their natural curiosity and desire to learn by making it clear that thinking and questioning are essential parts of growing up.

2. Teach Independent Judgment

- **Guide Decision-Making:** In daily life, encourage children to make their own decisions and consider the outcomes. Teach them to seek guidance through prayer and Bible reading, so that they gradually develop the ability to evaluate situations independently.

3. Emphasize Responsibility

- **Instill Accountability:** Teach children that they are responsible for their actions. Use family discussions and real-life examples to help them understand that every decision has consequences, and encourage them to face those responsibilities courageously.

Conclusion

By sharing the gospel message, we can not only help readers or listeners understand the Christian faith but also inspire them to think independently and take responsibility for their outcomes. Emphasizing the cultivation of these qualities in children helps them grow into individuals with independent thinking and a strong sense of responsibility—becoming role models for the entire society.

Reflecting on the Dragon Boat Festival: Shedding Inner Bindings, Living in Christ



Imagine if Qu Yuan lived today; his circumstances and choices would likely be very different. Modern society provides much more room for expression and problem-solving—through social media live broadcasts, legal channels, and public participation. Qu Yuan might not choose to drown himself as he did in ancient times. Instead, he could use modern media and the internet to share his thoughts and ideas, attracting public attention and support. He might emerge as a social activist, cultural protector, or environmental advocate rather than expressing discontent through self-harm.

Aspects of the Dragon Boat Festival That May Not Be Ideal

- **Extreme Nationalism and Neglect of Personal Value:** Although Qu Yuan's self-sacrifice demonstrated strong patriotism, extreme nationalism may lead to the neglect of individual worth. Today, while patriotism is valued, extreme methods are not endorsed. Modern society should emphasize balancing personal value with national interests, avoiding sacrificing personal happiness and the meaning of life for collective benefit.
- **Misunderstanding Self-Sacrifice:** While Qu Yuan's act of sacrifice was sometimes praised by ancient rulers as noble, such extreme actions do not align with modern values. Self-destruction neither solves problems nor really awakens people—it instead causes more tragedy and pain.

- **Blind Worship and Lack of Critical Thinking:** Traditional culture's uncritical veneration of Qu Yuan reflects a lack of analytical perspective toward historical figures and events. Modern society should cultivate critical thinking, learning to think independently and judge rationally, rather than following tradition blindly. Once again: do not follow blindly; avoid uncritically imitating behaviors that everyone else may be practicing incorrectly.

A Christian Perspective of Exhortation

- **Honoring the Lord Above All:** The Bible teaches, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength" (Mark 12:30). Honoring the Lord means seeking His will in all things and relying on His power, rather than on our own strength to solve problems.
- **Loving Your Neighbor as Yourself:** Jesus said, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:31). This commandment not only calls us to care for others but also to cherish our own life and well-being—remember that if you lose yourself, your loved ones bear the brunt of that loss. The Bible emphasizes solving problems through love and forgiveness rather than extreme self-sacrifice.
- **Critical Thinking:** The Scriptures instruct us, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind" (Romans 12:2). Christians should cultivate critical thinking and avoid following secular ideas unthinkingly. We should seek God's truth through prayer and study of the Bible.

Qualities Modern Chinese Christians Should Possess

- **Combining Reason with Faith:** Strive to integrate rational thought with faith—respect traditional culture while maintaining a critical mindset to avoid blind imitation and extreme actions.
- **Practice Love and Forgiveness:** In everyday life, live out the principles of love and forgiveness, care for others, and cherish life. For those growing up in the Confucian–Buddhist–Taoist cultural soil, use Biblical teachings and practical actions to guide your children toward establishing the correct values and developing independent and critical thinking skills.

- **A Balanced Perspective on Both Western and Traditional Celebrations:** Maintain a rational view and hold onto what is true in both Western and our traditional festivals. Although these concepts may seem easy to understand, it is challenging to practice them consistently because we are constantly surrounded by our cultural atmosphere. Hence, refusing to follow unthinkingly is key to practicing critical thinking.

- **Independence and Questioning:** Christians need to gradually learn to think for themselves, to question unreasonable traditions and beliefs, and to make wise decisions based on the Bible and God's guidance. "Watch out that no one deceives you" (Matthew 24:4) serves as a reminder.

Brothers and sisters, our lives should be filled with peace and joy—not fatigue and struggle. When we remember to cast aside the struggles arising from selfish desires and instead focus on following the Lord, living in an atmosphere of "loving one's neighbor as oneself," we can experience the freedom and abundant life that Christ brings. May every brother and sister find true rest and strength in Christ, and may we live out our faith and wisdom both on the Dragon Boat Festival and in our daily lives.

Through critical thinking, we can better understand and adapt to the changes of modern society. We must not follow traditions and authorities blindly; instead, use love and wisdom to influence the world while living authentically. This is the quality every brother and sister in this culturally complex environment should develop.

Finally, I wish you all to eat, drink, and be joyful!

How Should Friends Communicate: Critical Thinking and Social Responsibility



Introduction

In modern society, people live at different paces. The regulated use of social media—coupled with a prevailing indifference—has made effective communication increasingly difficult. While self-media platforms accelerate the process of self-expression, they also widen the gap for resonating on shared values. Many people tend to avoid expressing their own opinions and, in doing so, lack critical thinking. This not only hampers individual growth but also obstructs social harmony and progress. This article explores how to promote effective communication among friends through educational reform, civic awareness, and personal initiative. Below are some detailed discussions.

I. The Influence of History and Culture

Rooted in over two millennia of civilization, Confucian culture emphasizes collective interests and harmony, which has led to a weakening of individual rights and freedom of expression. In this context, people are more inclined to obey authority and the collective will rather than think independently—even when they occasionally experience moments of insight, these are quickly overridden by the notion that “the few must submit to the many.” Although Confucianism values moral education, in modern society it has almost become synonymous with “the mean” or “timidity.” Its ideals need to be balanced with the love and

forgiveness found in Christianity to harmonize the relationship between the individual and the collective.

II. The Legacy of Imperial Rule

Over more than two thousand years, imperial rule has left deep imprints on the social fabric. It has instilled a comprehensive system of social control—from psychological, physical, to institutional mechanisms—that suppresses independent thinking and the willingness to express oneself. Historically, rebels have usually faced severe punishment, which not only affected the individual but also their family and community. This led to a widespread fear of dissent.

III. Factors in Modern Society

New technologies and big data—powered AI now more efficiently govern the use of modern Chinese language. People no longer need to worry about “saying the wrong thing” or having their “direction of thought” questioned. Strict censorship on social platforms has forced public opinions to be more straightforward and simplified. With the extensive language regulation over time, people have learned to self-correct their words and gradually forget the deeper thoughts they wish to express. Discussions have become confined to non-controversial topics, thereby avoiding various troubles and leaving people more time to focus on trivial family matters.

IV. Social Structure

Although traditional Chinese culture values the collective, modern society has seen a rise in individualism and utilitarianism. People are increasingly focused on their immediate interests, often neglecting the public responsibilities that affect future generations. Social relationships (for example, in one’s “friend circle”) tend to be superficial; people maintain relationships mainly out of utilitarian motives rather than shared values or a sense of social responsibility.

V. The Lack of Critical Thinking

The long-term emphasis on exam-oriented education has neglected the cultivation of critical thinking skills. Students are often taught to rely on rote memorization and standard answers, with little opportunity to think independently or question established ideas. It is only after entering the workforce—when

one is “earning a living”—that many realize what they learned is not always what they need. Like many drivers who follow the rote routines learned in driving school, there is little chance during one’s development to practice and hone critical thinking.

How to Proceed

1. Educational Reform

- Introduce more debate, discussion, and critical thinking training within the educational system.
- Encourage students to think independently and express their ideas.
- The education system should offer a more diverse curriculum, including subjects like philosophy and logic, to help students develop holistically.

2. Fostering Civic Awareness

- Increase participation in community activities and civic education to strengthen people’s sense of responsibility for public affairs—this is key to deepening mutual care.
- Simultaneously, encourage media and public oversight to enhance transparency and accountability in social issues.

3. Personal Initiative

- Actively seek out information from multiple sources (engage in systematic study rather than merely scrolling through short videos).
- When time allows, review what your friends are “reading” or “liking” on social apps to understand the types of information that resonate with them.
- Develop a comprehensive understanding and analysis of social events, and, within a safe environment, be courageous enough to express your views.
- Cultivate a style of independent thought and critical thinking; steer away from the mentality of “everything is calm” or “I only care for myself” to avoid stagnation.

4. The Role of Christianity in Modern Society

- As the body of Christ on earth, the Church should have a clear stance.

- Modern believers must learn to combine rationality with faith—respecting traditional culture while maintaining a critical mindset.
- Avoid blind conformity and extreme behaviors.
- Practice principles of love and forgiveness, care for others, and cherish life while facing life’s challenges with a proactive attitude.

5. Guiding Children to Establish Correct Values

- For Christians growing up in the cultural soil influenced by Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism, use biblical teaching and personal example to help children build correct values.
- Cultivate independent thought and critical thinking skills from an early age.
- Remember that avoiding blind following is key to practicing critical thinking.
- Believers should learn to question unreasonable traditions and viewpoints and, relying on the Bible and God’s guidance, make wise choices.
- As Jesus taught, “Take heed that no one deceives you” (Matthew 24:4).

Facing Social Gray Areas

I. Focus on Social Justice

- Christians should be sensitive to issues of social justice and actively participate in matters that promote societal progress.
- The Bible teaches us to “act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8). This means staying alert to injustices and taking practical actions to help those who are shamed or suffering.

II. Communicate via Nonviolent Means

- When addressing social gray areas, Christians should advocate nonviolent communication and express their demands peacefully.
- Jesus said, “Love your enemies, pray for those who persecute you” (Matthew 5:44). Nonviolent methods not only embody Christian values of love and forgiveness but also help maintain societal peace and stability.

III. Educate and Enlighten

- Christians (and the Church) should educate and inspire others to recognize the roots of social issues, encouraging them to adopt a proactive approach rather than isolating themselves from their faith.
- As Paul states in Romans 12:2, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind.” This reminder calls us to continually learn and reflect so that we can approach social problems with a renewed heart and mind.

Conclusion

The teachings and values of Christianity can play an important role in modern society. Through educational reform, cultivation of civic awareness, and personal action, we can promote healthy social development. Believers and church leaders should focus on social justice, advocate nonviolent communication, educate and inspire others, and actively respond to national calls for a fairer and more harmonious society. May every Christian find true rest and strength in Christ and live out their faith and wisdom in everyday life. May every “friend” become a friend in spirit. Let us pray for this together.

A Life of the Disciple: Inner Struggle and Peace



Introduction

Yesterday, I read an article on a public account in which the author reflected on the nature of spiritual reliance. In the original text, the author noted: “As the years pass and circumstances change, I have finally come to understand that a spiritual reliance can be found in music, books, work, or nature, but it must not rest solely on a person.” He/She discovered that one should not place one’s entire spiritual support in another person—because as time goes by, human hearts change. While music, books, work, and nature might serve as relatively stable spiritual pillars at times, the final analysis shows that true spiritual reliance comes from an inner strength and fullness—not from others. He learned to cherish every present moment, face life’s challenges independently, and achieve inner peace and confidence.

That is a very good summary, isn’t it? But what I want to discuss is whether there is a more perfect “way out” for the disciples. Such scenarios occur in the past, present, and future. Many people, when facing the pressures and challenges of life, try to find a source of life support. Why do we call it “life support” rather than simply “spiritual reliance”? Because the pressures of life, when accumulated over time, eventually turn into a kind of “medical record.” Once people become aware of this, they start

placing their reliance on others or on material things. Even if there is short-term “success,” it eventually leads to disappointment and pain—a lack of a lasting, stable mainstay.

As disciples of Christ, perhaps we should recognize that true life support can come only from God—not from a “god-image” but from the Almighty Lord—and only through the complete obedience of body, mind, and spirit. The following discussion explores how to find strength through faith, regulate our behavior, and thereby experience peace and joy in life.

The Biblical Perspective

Indeed, how can human effort and our own thoughts and intentions solve these troubles? Relying on the teachings of our Lord Jesus is not an empty phrase. When brothers and sisters **humble themselves, laying aside their pride and desires, and approach Him in prayer with the words of Scripture, you will receive the answer.** [** is used to represent this underlined text, and ** will be used instead below]

Some readers of this article may belong to other faiths—and that is fine; please take your time to read through it.

On the other hand, many fellow believers also face similar issues. Even though we know we should rely on the teachings and prayer of the Lord, it is inevitable that some among us secretly try to solve problems by relying on our own intellect or temperament rather than on God’s instruction, and eventually fall into Satan’s trap—leading to harm in body, mind, and spirit. In the end, such methods are even less effective than those of our unbelieving friends. So what should we do?

1. Rely on God, Not on Others

When facing life’s challenges, many habitually depend on other people, thinking they can be a haven for our souls. However, Psalm 62:5-6 reminds us:

“Be still, my soul, and wait patiently for God; my hope is from Him. Truly He is my rock and my salvation; He is my fortress, and I will not be shaken.” How can we be sure that “God is our true reliance”? Look to the underlined text above**—you will see that He is indeed our steadfast rock and savior.

2. Seek the Comfort and Strength of a “Helper”

Under the weight of life's burdens and pressures, we often feel exhausted and helpless. In Matthew 11:28, Jesus says:

"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." This verse encourages us to cast our burdens on God—He is our helper. Trusting Him will truly bring us rest and strength. Whether it's an actual heavy load or the burden of anxious thoughts, we cannot carry it all alone. The term "burden" here is a metaphor—not meaning you literally have heavy objects on your shoulders, but rather referring to the worries, anxieties, and fatigue that arise from your own subjective assumptions. We need not bear everything by ourselves; when we pray and ask Him**, God is willing to share our load and give us the strength and wisdom we need. Do you understand?

3. Joy Comes from Walking with the "Helper"

Inner peace and joy do not depend on the external environment, but rather on our experience of walking with God. In Philippians 4:11–13, Paul says:

"I have learned in whatever state I am to be content... I can do all things through Him who gives me strength." You can think of this verse as a metaphor: whether in good times or bad, as long as we depend on God—our helper**—and on that deep inner strength (which comes from the Creator of all things), we can find satisfaction and joy. When you choose to let go of your own "thoughts and intentions" and focus solely on His grace, you establish a close relationship with Him—just like a "miraculous smartphone" connected to high-speed Wi-Fi, enabling endless connectivity. Without that Wi-Fi, that smartphone is nothing more than a brick and cannot let you experience His presence and assistance in life**.

4. Concrete Actions to Address Inner Struggle

- **Prayer and Bible Reading:** Spend time every day in prayer and Scripture to seek God's guidance and wisdom**. Communicating with God will bring peace and strength to your spirit.
- **Participation in Church Activities:** Actively engage in church events to build a network of spiritual friendships and support. This not only helps you grow in your faith, but also provides mutual aid in times of difficulty.

- **Practice Love and Forgiveness:** Jesus taught us to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:31b). Living out principles of love and forgiveness helps establish harmonious relationships and reduces internal conflicts.
- **Cultivate Critical Thinking:** When facing the gray areas and challenges of society, Christian disciples should develop a spirit of critical thinking. Do not follow worldly opinions blindly; instead, seek God’s truth through prayer** and the teaching of Scripture.

Many biblical passages convey their messages through metaphor. Beyond understanding the literal meaning and historical context, we must grasp the answers by focusing on the underlined segments** provided in Scripture. Do not conjecture about the text—receive it wholeheartedly with sincerity.

Conclusion

The life of a disciple should be filled with peace and joy rather than weariness and struggle. When we choose to honor the Lord above all** and live in an atmosphere of “loving our neighbor as ourselves,” we experience the freedom and abundant life that Christ brings. May every disciple find true rest and strength in Christ and live out their faith and wisdom in everyday life. Even friends of other faiths may encounter similar issues—if you remain reliant on “people” and “things” instead of receiving the teaching of our Lord Jesus, consider embracing His guidance. Let us pray together!

Revisiting Luke 15: A Father's Love Is Like a Mountain, the Way Home

Introduction

Today is Father's Day—a special day to celebrate the love of a father. On this occasion, we revisit the well-known “Prodigal Son” story in Luke 15. This passage not only displays a father's unconditional love for his son but also prompts us to reflect on the vital role of fathers in modern society and the selfless devotion they offer.

Overview of the Passage

The story in Luke 15 recounts the relationship between a father and his two sons. The younger son demands his share of the inheritance and leaves home, where he squanders his wealth in wild living until he ends up in dire straits. Finally, he decides to return home and ask for his father's forgiveness. Rather than rebuke him, the father joyfully welcomes his return with a lavish feast. The older son feels resentful, yet the father gently explains the reason for the celebration: “For this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.”

The Role of the Modern Father

In today's society, the role of the father is equally crucial. Fathers are not only the backbone of the family but also role models and spiritual mentors to their children. Yet many fathers, caught up in busy work and life, may neglect the emotional bond with their children and give little thought to how their own faith—and the values and worldview derived from it—affects their children. Father's Day reminds us that a father's love is like a mountain—steady, unassuming, but unwavering.

1. **Unconditional Love:** The father in the story demonstrates unconditional love. No matter how far a child strays or what mistakes are made, he always opens his arms to welcome them home. Modern fathers should likewise treat their children's missteps and rebellion with compassion and understanding, offering opportunities for repentance and renewal.
2. **Courage to Return:** For every wayward child, this story serves as encouragement. No matter how grievous the mistakes in life, one can always choose to return—return to the family,

return to the right path. Although modern society is rife with temptations and pitfalls, we must remember that home will always be our safe haven.

3. **Mutual Understanding:** The older son's feelings of neglect reflect the common competition and misunderstandings among siblings in many modern families. The father's gentle response reminds us that family members should show more understanding and forgiveness, sharing the grace of love together.

4. **Conveying Love and Faith:** Father's Day is not only a celebration of the father's role—it is also a time to pass on love and faith. Fathers should, by their words and actions, transmit love and faith to their children, teaching them to uphold principles of integrity and kindness. This transmission is best accomplished through example rather than mere words.

Reflections Between Father and Son

On this special day, let us be grateful for the hard work and sacrifice of our fathers. No matter where they are, children must offer understanding—after all, none of us is perfect. In some families, fathers—even through their immaturity or misguided actions—have caused irreparable harm, injuries that may take a lifetime to heal. Today, may those “children” break free from the bondage and burdens of past wounds and return to the joyful path that God has set before them. And may more fathers rediscover biblical teaching and treat their children and families with unconditional love, which, of course, begins with treating themselves well and submitting to God's guidance.

I recall the early years of my own fatherhood—when I felt more like a big child breaking free from my parents' “control,” indulging in the company of “hooligans” (in my mother's words) and pursuing “food, drink, and fun.” I would sometimes try to “solve” work problems by relying on my own drinking ability... In those days, even though I was physically strong, my mind was empty; I was unwilling to believe that the Holy Spirit could play a “leveraging” role in my life. It wasn't until I encountered problems that I could not resolve by my so-called wisdom or alcohol that I finally humbled myself before Him. After becoming His child, I came to have a Father in heaven—and it was at that

moment I truly began to understand my responsibilities as a father.

May every father find strength and wisdom in God's love, become the steadfast support of their family, and lead a life of joy and ease.

Let us pray together.

Is Worship a Guarantee Against Living in Hell?



“Many Christians may attend church and worship all their lives, yet end up living in hell.” Have you heard this statement, dear brothers and sisters? It might sound alarmist. What it emphasizes is an important point in the Christian faith: merely participating in church services and worship does not guarantee salvation. Salvation is not demonstrated solely by external behaviors but by genuine inner faith, a true relationship with God, and the ongoing examination and correction of one’s sins.

1. **The Relationship Between Inner Faith and External Actions**

The Bible repeatedly stresses that true faith lies in inner transformation and an authentic relationship with God—not merely in outward religious acts. For example, in Matthew 15:8, Jesus says, “These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.” In other words, mere lip service and weekly worship are not enough; the key issue is whether we are worshiping with our hearts and sincerity.

2. **Genuine Faith Versus Hypocrisy**

Jesus frequently criticized the hypocritical religious leaders, who appeared devout on the outside yet lacked true faith and repentance in their hearts. In Matthew 23, for example, He repeatedly rebuked the Pharisees and the teachers of the law as “hypocrites.” This was once my own impression when reading

these passages—I even felt that I, together with Jesus, had every right to accuse them. Yet as my experiences and study deepened, I gradually realized that I too was one of those “hypocrites”—in short, my repentance was incomplete, meaning that my professed trust in the Lord was not fully reflected in my actions.

3. Salvation Resting on Trusting Jesus

The Bible teaches that salvation fundamentally depends on trusting in Jesus Christ, accepting Him as one’s personal Savior, and relying on Him in every aspect—not merely being a “Sunday Christian.” As John 3:16 states, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” Therefore, salvation is based on complete trust and acceptance of Jesus, and on living out that faith in the midst of a secular life full of contradictions—not merely on our human efforts and wisdom.

In another perspective, while actions themselves cannot save us, our faith is naturally manifested in the deeds that follow Christ’s teaching. James 2:17 tells us, “Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.” True faith will inevitably produce righteous actions and a lifestyle in harmony with God’s will.

With this foundation in place, let us address today’s question: How should we worship?

1. The Prerequisite for Worship: Self-Examination and Repentance

The true meaning of worship lies in our intimate relationship with God, which includes examining and correcting our sins rather than merely engaging in prayer and liturgy. The Bible instructs us to confess our sins and repent—for example, 1 John 1:9 says, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” After confessing and repenting during worship, Christians must be cautious not to continue in self-righteousness in daily life but rather to consistently live out God’s teachings, demonstrating genuine repentance and change. Otherwise, as mentioned at the beginning of this discussion, one might inadvertently slip into a life that resembles “hell” on earth.

2. The Real-Life Manifestation of Hell

Here, “hell” is not only referring to eternal punishment after death; it also signifies the inner torment and spiritual bondage resulting from long-term enslavement to sin. Persistent guilt and the heavy burden on one’s soul can bring about emotional distress and even physical ailments. As the Bible states, “For the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). This “death” refers not only to physical decay but also to the emotional and spiritual anguish—worry, anxiety, and suffering—that results from being weighed down by sin, robbing us of true joy. The practical significance of worship “with spirit and truth” (John 4:24) is that when we accept Jesus Christ as our Savior, we are to rely entirely on Him. We should not use our emotions as a substitute for salvation, nor should we allow the sins and faults of others to become a barrier between us and the Lord.

Dear brothers and sisters, our faith is rooted in a genuine relationship with God, in trusting Jesus Christ, and in examining and repenting of our sins—not in mere external religious practices or in the fleeting illusions of “spiritual chick-pea soup.” In the community, those who are truly saved will exhibit behaviors and attitudes that align with their faith, continuously examining and correcting their misdeeds, thereby living out the likeness of Christ. At the same time, we must recognize that the pain of hell is not just a future punishment, but the present consequence of sin’s grip on our hearts and bodies. **Without a life marked by repentance, it is as if we live in hell each day,** deprived of the joy of the Lord’s grace. May everyone break free from the bondage of sin through the word of the Lord and enjoy the inner peace and joy He offers.

Let us pray together!

Revisiting Revelation: Understanding Its Message



Revelation is the last book of the New Testament, filled with symbolic and prophetic language. Understanding Revelation requires considering its historical background, literary style, and theological significance. Here are some key points to help you better understand Revelation:

Historical Background

1. **Author and Date:**

Revelation was written by the apostle John around AD 95–96 while he was exiled on Patmos. At that time, the Roman Empire was under Emperor Domitian, and Christians were persecuted.

2. **Intended Readers:**

Originally, Revelation was addressed to the seven churches in Asia, specifically concerning their unique situations and challenges.

Literary Form

1. **Apocalyptic Literature:**

Revelation belongs to the genre of apocalyptic literature, which uses rich symbolism and metaphor to reveal supernatural truths. Its symbols—including numbers, colors, animals, and other images—often carry specific theological and historical meanings.

2. **Symbolic Language:**

Revelation is filled with symbolic language, such as the seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven bowls. These symbols generally represent the processes of God's judgment and salvation.

Theological Significance

1. **Main Narrative:**

Revelation unveils the scenes of the end times, including the final judgment and the creation of a new heaven and new earth.

Major sections include:

- Introduction and the Letters to the Churches (Chapters 1–3)
- Heavenly Visions and the Seven Seals (Chapters 4–7)
- The Seven Trumpets (Chapters 8–11)
- The Final Battle (Chapters 12–14)
- The Seven Bowls (Chapters 15–16)
- The Fall of Babylon and the Victory of the Lamb (Chapters 17–19)
- The Millennium and the Final Judgment (Chapter 20)
- The New Heaven, New Earth, and the New Jerusalem (Chapters 21–22)

2. **Core Message:**

Revelation conveys the sovereignty of God and the assurance of His ultimate victory. Regardless of the persecution and hardships believers may face, God's plan will be fulfilled, and the faithful will receive eternal life. It encourages believers to remain steadfast in their faith despite suffering and to remain loyal to God.

Methods for Understanding Revelation

1. **Symbolic Interpretation:**

Study the symbols in Revelation in light of the entire Bible, especially drawing on similar symbols and prophecies in the Old Testament. For instance, the number seven often signifies perfection and completeness; the dragon typically represents Satan or evil; and the lamb symbolizes Jesus Christ.

2. **Historical Context:**

Understanding the prophecies in Revelation must be done in conjunction with the historical background, such as Roman oppression and early Christian history.

3. Theological Study:

Reading theological commentaries and scholarly works can deepen your understanding of Revelation's content and significance. Participating in Bible study groups or listening to sermons by pastors and theologians can also be very helpful.

Conclusion

Revelation is a book full of symbolism and prophecy that aims to reveal God's sovereignty and ultimate victory. Understanding it requires combining historical context, symbolic language, and theological significance. Through studying other parts of the Bible and consulting related theological works, readers can better grasp and apply the message of Revelation.

Deviations of Social Platforms and the Babel Tower Phenomenon



In the story of the Tower of Babel, God thwarted humanity's delusional ambition to build a tower to rival His glory. Today, social platforms—once pure tools for communication—have gradually strayed from the goal of unity, becoming obstacles to achieving common social objectives.

In recent years, mainstream social media has become a major tool of communication for the masses, yet its shortcomings have also become increasingly evident. In modern society, interpersonal relationships have grown more complex and diverse; friendships in online circles range from close to distant. Often, interactions in these circles are limited to superficial likes and comments without deep communication or emotional connection. What's shown in our online friend circles is frequently a curated picture of positivity, which may mask reality and lead to misunderstandings. Moreover, because social media is a display platform, people often feel an invisible pressure—seeing others share beautiful lives or moments of success can induce feelings of inferiority or anxiety.

The Babel Tower Phenomenon

The Tower of Babel story describes humanity's attempt to build a tower to reach heaven and share in God's glory, only to have their unified language and purpose disrupted by God, causing

them to scatter across the earth. This story illustrates humanity's delusion in pursuing absolute unity and connection while forgetting God's original intent for our creation.

Today's social platforms can be seen as a reverse and evolved version of that Babel Tower—where people are drawn instead to another “god,” the “creator of capital.” Increasingly, individuals pursue a self-centered spiritual quest, and in the process, they lose the ability to resonate on common values. Responses to social issues become as fleeting as “droplets on water” after disturbance, lacking collective, value-driven resonance and pursuit. Refined self-centered individualism now requires little fear of a determined will to “reach the heavens” under the mandate of the “capital creator.”

The Impact of Short Videos

While social media offers unprecedented opportunities for connection, it simultaneously creates new divisions and chaos—communication barriers, fragmented information, and a separation between the virtual and the real. The rise of short video platforms like Douyin and Kuaishou has also led to several issues:

- **Time Consumption:** Short videos are rich in content, quickly updated, and highly entertaining, easily consuming substantial time without users realizing it.
- **Lack of Depth:** Such content is primarily for entertainment, lacking substantive discussion and reflection. Prolonged engagement leads to distracted attention and hampers deep thought and learning.
- **Lack of Shared Resonance:** Although short video platforms can rapidly spread information, their fragmented nature prevents the formation of lasting social resonance and in-depth discussion. Users often struggle to develop a sense of collective responsibility or a shared social mission.

How to Overcome the Babel Tower Phenomenon

We must recognize that social media is simply a tool for communication. Real communication and connection depend on a dialogue between our hearts—and with God—rather than on

building another Babel Tower. True shared values and common goals come from personal growth, practical action, and the natural resonance that follows, not from pursuing false targets dictated by the “capital creator.”

In facing these challenges posed by modern social media, Christian disciples need to strengthen themselves in several areas:

- **Self-Examination and Prayer:** The Bible encourages believers to maintain a pure heart and connection with God through prayer and self-reflection. Jesus said in Matthew 6:6, “But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen.”
- **Authenticity and Honesty:** Stay genuine online. Avoid false portrayals and ensure that your words and actions are consistent. Jesus said, “Let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No'” (Matthew 5:37).
- **Selective Sharing:** Be discerning about what you share, protect your privacy, and avoid relying excessively on likes and comments for validation. At the same time, do not hide completely; remember that the testimony of fellow disciples who practice the Way is a powerful example.
- **Prioritize Real-Life Relationships:** Invest more time in developing face-to-face interactions and relationships, which foster more genuine and warm communication.
- **Be Wary of the Drawbacks of Short Videos:** Christian disciples should especially guard against the time and attention drain posed by short video platforms. The Bible reminds us to “make the most of every opportunity” (Ephesians 5:15–16). Allocate time for short videos wisely, focus on content that is edifying and meaningful, and engage in deep discussions that foster thoughtful exchange.

Conclusion

WeChat Moments, as an important modern social platform, reflects the complex and varied relationships among people. While it allows for convenient communication and interaction, it also brings challenges such as privacy issues and social pressure. The Babel Tower phenomenon of modern social media reminds

us that although technology offers numerous opportunities for connection, true understanding and connection require sincerity and active effort.

Modern social communication is laden with complexities— from historical and cultural influences to the rise of individualism, utilitarianism, and the technological regulation of language. The absence of critical thinking, fueled by test-based education, further limits deep dialogue. Nonetheless, through educational reform, civic awareness, personal initiative, and a balanced integration of rationality and faith (as taught in Christianity), we can overcome these challenges. By fostering genuine, face-to-face relationships and carefully navigating social media’s pitfalls, we can forge connections that reflect our shared values and collective social responsibility.

In this process, Christians can draw on biblical teaching to maintain a pure heart and take proactive steps in building more authentic and meaningful relationships, thereby promoting progress toward a harmonious society.

May every believer and every friend find true strength and understanding in these efforts, and may our lives be filled with the peace and joy of living out our faith authentically in both our online and offline communities.

Let us pray together!

Less “Judgment,” More Focused “Worship.”



In the life and worship of a Christian, judging others and harboring biases is a common occurrence. But as a disciple of Jesus, are you aware that this not only hinders our spiritual growth, but also disrupts harmonious relationships with others and becomes the greatest barrier to our communication with the Lord? A disciple’s duty is to be Jesus’s “spokesperson,” not a “broker” who carries personal (or biased) opinions. Jesus taught us not to judge others so that we ourselves would not be judged (Matthew 7:1). To better understand and practice this teaching, we can use a “polarizer” – one that focuses on the teachings and salvation of Jesus, filtering out the worldly noise and prejudice.

In truth, no one likes to admit they are judging others or is even aware of it. Let’s list some of the hindrances caused by judgment:

Obstacles to Spiritual Growth

Judging others leads us into traps of self-righteousness and pride, causing us to overlook our own sins and shortcomings. This mindset drives us away from God’s grace and robs us of opportunities for spiritual growth; it also sparks conflict and discord within the church, undermining trust and unity. An environment filled with judgment diminishes the church’s witness, making it hard to attract more people to Christ.

In what situations does prejudice lead to judgment? Within the church, people often judge others based on differences in social status or wealth. For example, some might consider a brother’s words to be the truth simply because he has greater social influence, dismissing other opinions; others might look down upon brothers and sisters in lower positions or without

employment simply because their own status is higher. This attitude not only wounds others' dignity but also goes against the Christian principles of equality and love. Additionally, some judge others by their lifestyles—for instance, one group might prefer healthy eating while another indulges in gourmet pleasures. Judging someone's lifestyle only drags us into disputes and disunity.

Focusing on Jesus with the “Polarizer”

Focused worship begins with examining and correcting our own sins rather than engaging in prayer without practical action. The characteristic of a disciple is not merely “doing good” but having the courage and will to examine one's sins. Jesus taught us to worship God with sincerity (John 4:24); this means that in our worship we must confess our sins, repent, and live out God's will. I believe that when we look to Jesus, we should pay attention to at least the following aspects:

1. Focus on Social Responsibility

When a Christian starts judging others, should they not reflect on their own social responsibilities? Every Sunday, in addition to worshipping God in church, we should allocate more time to caring about justice and truth in society. Jesus cared for the poor, the sick, and the oppressed during His time on earth (Matthew 25:35-36). Should we not gradually shift from being part of the “silent majority” to actively participating in social issues, engaging in politics and current events, and promoting God's justice and love? If possible, further examine your faith and, through continuous learning, consider whether your perspectives on social issues lean toward the “Left” (liberal) or the “Right” (conservative, correct), or reflect on the saying: anything that deviates from the goal must be influenced by some force—perhaps your pride or attachment to certain emotions... One thing is certain: it cannot come from God.

2. Living in the Present

After diverting the energy spent on judgment toward social responsibility, we must still invest time in learning to live in the moment with gratitude and joy—letting go of attachments to the past and worries about the future. As the Bible says, “Rejoice in the Lord always” (Philippians 4:4) and “Do not be anxious about

anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God” (Philippians 4:6).

3. The Significance of the “Polarizer”

Anyone who has used an SLR camera understands the role of a polarizer; it filters out scattered light, making photos clearer and more vibrant. In the same way, each person’s soul needs a “polarizer” to filter out the secular noise and prejudice, focusing on Jesus’s teachings and salvation. This not only deepens our faith but also enables us to live out the true essence of being a Christian.

4. Equality in Relationships

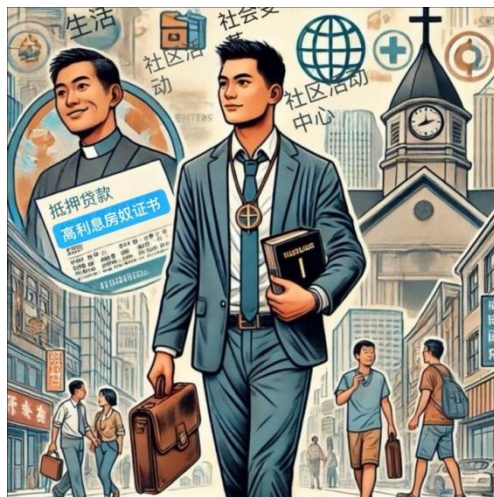
Life brings many different opinions, but these should not be an excuse for premature generalizations or sweeping judgments. With a deeper understanding and care for others, we discover more opportunities to display Christ’s love. Moreover, when everyone realizes that before God we are equal, they will understand that all conflicts, disagreements, and judgments become insignificant in the presence of our Lord Jesus. As Paul states, “For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:26).

Conclusion

In modern society, the rapid development of social media and fragmented information makes it easier for us to be influenced by the outside world and lose focus on our faith. As disciples of Christ, we must remain vigilant and reflective—cast off judgment and focus on worship. Using a “polarizer” to concentrate on Jesus’s teachings, caring for social responsibilities, living in the moment, and embracing joy in life, may each of us continually grow in our faith, become the children pleasing to God, and live out the example of Christ in society to glorify His name.

Let us pray together for this!

Distinguishing Various “Doctrines”: Engaging in Civic Life Without Bias



“Civic life” here refers to politics. For many, this topic seems somewhat removed from their immediate reality because, in this post-pandemic, post-America, post-WTO context, the vast majority of people feel overwhelmed by the pressures of daily life, mortgages, and raising the next generation—making it hard to engage in broader social issues. Therefore, this article is divided into two main parts. The first part offers a brief set of suggestions for friends too busy with daily life to get involved in politics; the second part provides more detailed advice for those with additional time and energy. In any circumstance, we can balance personal life with social responsibilities through concrete actions:

Part One: Simple and Practical Suggestions

1. Daily Reflection and Prayer:

This is a small-step approach. Try to spend about 10 minutes each day catching up on the news or reading a book about social issues—after all, even a small step forward is better than none. Then, spend a few minutes reflecting and praying to bring peace to your soul and better equip you for life’s challenges.

2. Participate in Community Activities:

Try to participate in small community or church-organized events—even if only once a month, you will experience the

strength and support of a collective. Abandoning church entirely can be risky, for no one can be completely self-reliant.

3. Manage Your Time Reasonably:

Use time management tools such as your phone's calendar or a task list to help you complete both work and personal tasks more efficiently.

4. Maintain a Healthy Lifestyle:

Stick to a healthy diet and regular exercise. This not only benefits your physical health but also enhances your overall energy and mood.

5. Stay Informed About Social Issues:

Even if you don't have time for deep involvement, you can remain aware by reading news or joining online discussions. This helps develop an awareness of societal dynamics.

That's it for now. While these practices may not be extraordinary, they ensure you maintain a sense of participation in society and a healthy state of being.

Part Two: Discerning Right from Wrong and Facing Worldviews

In modern society—especially after many social movements—many Christians keep a distance from politics or even avoid discussing it. However, as the Bible teaches, Christians have a responsibility not only to hold firm to the truth in matters of faith but also to practice justice and compassion in civic life. In other words, we should not confuse politics with governing power; even if you do not (or do not wish to) “hold office,” you are always under some form of governance, and whether that governance is justified falls under political scrutiny. No living fish can ignore the quality of the water in which it lives. This article explores how Christians can distinguish various doctrines and establish a correct worldview to engage with political life—especially by discerning between left-wing and right-wing views.

I. Understanding “Politics” and “Doctrines”

1. The Nature of Politics:

Politics is not confined to government affairs; it involves managing public issues and influences all aspects of society. Christians should not bury their heads in the sand to avoid

politics but rather engage actively, using principles of justice and compassion to impact society.

2. **Definition of Doctrines:**

A doctrine is a systematic set of beliefs that reflects people's values and propositions in a particular area. For example, capitalism emphasizes property protection and market freedom, while communism stresses equality and collective interests.

II. Fundamental Principles for Christians

1. **A Reverent Fear of God:**

The Bible teaches, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding" (Proverbs 9:10). All actions and thoughts of a Christian should be founded on reverence for God and obedience to His word.

2. **Justice and Compassion:**

As Christians, we are called to "act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God" (Micah 6:8). This means that in our political lives, we must stand for justice, care for the vulnerable, and participate in society with humility.

3. **The Standard of Truth:**

Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). Christians should use the Bible's teachings as the measure of truth when evaluating the validity of different doctrines.

III. Christian Doctrinal Perspectives

1. **Calvinism**

Positive Aspects: Emphasizes God's sovereignty and predestination, holding that everything is under God's control. Calvinists believe that Christians should work diligently in society to glorify God.

Caution: Sometimes criticized for fatalism, it may lead to indifference toward social issues because everything is seen as preordained.

2. **Arminianism**

Positive Aspects: Emphasizes human free will and responsibility, believing that everyone has the opportunity for salvation. Arminians often focus more on social justice and individual accountability.

Caution: It can be critiqued for overemphasizing human freedom, potentially weakening acknowledgment of God's sovereignty.

Many Christians may already be practicing aspects of Arminianism, so self-examination is worthwhile.

3. **Liberal Theology**

Positive Aspects: Focuses on social justice and moral reform, stressing that Christian faith should integrate with modern science and philosophy to adapt to societal change.

Caution: This approach might lead to diluting traditional doctrines or even denying core Christian beliefs such as the divinity and resurrection of Jesus.

4. **Evangelicalism**

Positive Aspects: Emphasizes evangelism and the practice of personal faith, upholding the Bible's authority and Christ's redemptive work.

Caution: May sometimes neglect social issues and political engagement, overly focusing on individual salvation while overlooking social justice.

5. **Liberation Theology**

Positive Aspects: Emphasizes socioeconomic justice, focusing on poverty and oppression, and insists that the Christian faith must work toward social transformation.

Caution: It can be criticized for being excessively politicized and even accused of aligning too closely with certain radical political movements.

6. **Grace Gospel**

Positive Aspects: Emphasizes God's grace and redemption, asserting that believers are saved solely through grace without an overemphasis on deeds. This view stresses God's love and forgiveness, offering great comfort and hope.

Caution: It may be critiqued for neglecting behavioral change and the pursuit of a holy life, potentially leading to an abuse of grace, a weak witness, and insufficient emphasis on repentance.

IV. **How to Distinguish Various Doctrines**

- **Socialism:** Advocates collective interests and state control of the economy. Christians should consider whether it treats everyone fairly and respects individual freedom and rights.
- **Capitalism:** Emphasizes individual freedom and a market economy. Christians should be mindful of its potential to

create wealth disparities and social injustice, advocating for justice even within a free market.

- **Liberalism:** Stresses individual rights and freedoms. Christians need to ensure that it respects religious beliefs and moral values, guarding against extreme individualism that could lead to social division.
- **Conservatism:** Emphasizes traditional values and social stability. Christians should evaluate whether it aligns with biblical teachings and resist stagnation by not opposing necessary reform and progress.
- **Communism:** Advocates for social equality and the elimination of wealth gaps through collective ownership. Some communist ideals echo the Christian mandate to care for the poor, but in practice they often lead to authoritarianism and the suppression of individual freedom. Christians should be cautious of potential infringements on religious freedom and human rights.

V. Distinguishing the Left from the Right

1. **The Left:** Generally advocates for social equality, government intervention, a welfare state, and social justice. Many of the Left's viewpoints resonate with the Bible's concern for poverty and oppression. However, Christians must be cautious that the Left may overly depend on governmental intervention while neglecting personal responsibility and freedom.
2. **The Right:** Typically emphasizes individual freedom, a market economy, limited government, and traditional values. Right-wing views stress personal accountability and the effectiveness of a free market in creating wealth and solving social problems. However, Christians should be cautious that the Right might ignore social injustices and the needs of the vulnerable.

VI. Church Factions and Their Political Alignments

1. **Evangelicals and Conservatism:** Evangelicals often support conservative politics, emphasizing traditional family values and taking stands against issues like abortion and same-sex marriage. Conservative political views frequently overlap with evangelical practices.

2. **Mainline/Liberal Christianity and Liberalism:**

Mainline or liberal Christians tend to support liberal ideologies, emphasizing social justice, inclusivity, and diversity, and often backing reforms such as immigration, social welfare, and environmental protection.

3. **Liberation Theology and Socialism:**

Liberation theology shares much in common with socialism by emphasizing the elimination of poverty and oppression, focusing on socioeconomic justice, and advocating social reform to achieve equality and fairness.

4. **Calvinism and Political Conservatism:**

Calvinists often resonate with political conservatives, emphasizing order and authority, and supporting traditional social structures and moral values.

VII. Establishing a Correct Worldview

1. **Based on the Bible:**

The Bible is the foundation of the Christian worldview. Through its study, we can understand God's will and let His word guide our thoughts and actions.

2. **Maintain Critical Thinking:**

Christians need to develop critical thinking in order to avoid blindly accepting various doctrinal viewpoints. Through prayer and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we can discern truth from falsehood.

3. **Actively Participate in Social Affairs:**

Christians should actively engage in social matters, serving as salt and light to contribute to justice, peace, and well-being. We must not avoid responsibility but rather manifest Christ's love and justice in our respective spheres.

4. **Pay Attention to Social Hot Topics:**

Christians should be attentive to current social issues and, guided by biblical principles, share our perspectives and influence public opinion as a testimony for God's Kingdom.

5. **Balance Faith with Social Engagement:**

Although some Christians may tend to focus solely on religious concerns while ignoring social matters, the Bible teaches us to glorify God in every area of life. We must not confine ourselves

only to church affairs; rather, we should extend Christ's love and justice to every corner of society.

Conclusion

The categorizations in the second part represent only a fraction of the various doctrines we face. Social phenomena are complex and diverse, and when Christians confront various doctrines and political life, they must remain lifelong students—upholding biblical standards, maintaining reverence for God, practicing justice and compassion, and actively participating in societal affairs. By discerning the authenticity of doctrines and establishing a correct worldview, brothers and sisters can become faithful stewards of God in this ever-changing world, thereby manifesting His glory.

We hope this article helps Christian disciples maintain the purity of their faith amid complex social and political environments while actively engaging in society as salt and light.

Let us pray together for this!

Discussing the Differences in Social Life among Chinese and Anglo-American Christians

Differences in Historical Background and Social Environment

1. Historical Background

- **Chinese Christianity:**

The history of Christianity in China is relatively short, with large-scale missionary work beginning only in the 19th century. It has experienced several periods of widespread religious suppression—especially during the severe persecutions of the Cultural Revolution—and only began to gradually recover and develop after the Reform and Opening Up. Throughout its history, however, the church has remained on the margins of society, facing considerable religious pressures and social discrimination, with both faith and social activities being significantly restricted. Church life is mainly confined to the home and the Three-Self Patriotic Movement. Faced with strict governmental management and control over religious affairs, the church is unable to participate broadly in social matters and public policy discussions.

- **Anglo-American Christianity:**

Christianity in Britain and America has a long and deep-rooted history. Since the Middle Ages, it has been the mainstream faith and has exerted profound influence on social culture and political systems. Particularly in the United States, Christianity has had a tremendous impact on social life; Christians are widely involved in politics, education, social reform, and even presidential elections. The church plays an important role in social affairs by providing social services, participating in public policy debates, and promoting social justice and moral values.

2. Social Environment

- **Modern China:**

The contemporary social environment in China is full of challenges. Christians face considerable pressures simply to survive and are often so busy with daily life and work that they have little time or resources to participate in social transformation. Overall, society has a relatively low acceptance of religion, and Christians are often required to maintain their

faith in a covert setting. They have limited social influence, and even when they try to live out the teachings of Jesus Christ, their impact is often restricted to their own spiritual growth.

- **Anglo-American Countries:**

In contrast, the social environment in the United Kingdom and the United States is relatively open. Christians are free to express their faith and engage in social activities. The church and Christian organizations wield broad influence in society, using media, education, and social services as channels to spread faith and values.

Differences in Social Life

1. Political Participation

- **Chinese Christians:**

Due to political restrictions, Chinese Christians rarely participate directly in politics. Their expression of faith is mainly confined to private and religious settings. Their focus is on persevering in faith amidst adversity and influencing others within personal and small-group contexts.

- **Anglo-American Christians:**

These Christians actively participate in politics. They influence public policy through elections, lobbying, and social movements. Many political leaders openly profess their Christian faith and base their political decisions on its values.

2. Social Services

- **Chinese Christians:**

Social service activities are mostly internal to the church, aimed at helping fellow believers. The scale and impact of such social services are severely limited, making widespread outreach difficult.

- **Anglo-American Christians:**

In these countries, Christians take part in a wide range of social service efforts—including education, healthcare, and charitable work. Churches and Christian organizations play significant roles in social services, helping the poor and the vulnerable while promoting social justice.

3. Educational and Cultural Influence

- **Chinese Christians:**

With limited educational resources, faith education primarily takes place within the family and the church. In mainstream culture, Christianity has a smaller influence, and the dissemination of the faith faces many challenges.

- **Anglo-American Christians:**

Churches and Christian schools hold an important place in the educational system, systematically imparting Christian values. Christian culture occupies a prominent position in mainstream culture and is widely disseminated through literature, art, media, and other channels.

Handling of Historical Social Events

The Role of Chinese Christians in Historical Social Events

1. The Taiping Rebellion:

The Taiping Rebellion was a peasant uprising in Chinese history that was carried out in the name of Christianity. Viewed from the perspective of “participating in governance,” although it eventually failed, it demonstrated the potential influence of Christianity on Chinese society.

2. Religious Persecutions during the “Red Culture” Movement of the 1960s:

During this period, Chinese Christians suffered severe persecution. Many churches were forced to close, and believers were compelled to stop meeting publicly. Nonetheless, many Christians persisted in their faith even under such harsh conditions, demonstrating remarkable resilience and loyalty.

3. The Religious Revival after the Reform and Opening Up:

After the reforms, Christianity in China developed rapidly and the number of believers increased dramatically. However, due to the environment that did not allow active participation in political affairs or policy debate, the social influence of Chinese Christians remains limited, staying mostly within the church and family life—and showing trends of being overwhelmed by secular forces.

The Social Influence of Anglo-American Christians

1. The Renaissance and the Reformation:

Anglo-American Christians played key roles during the Renaissance and the Reformation, promoting intellectual liberation and social progress. Reformers such as Martin Luther and John Calvin advanced the cause of education and scientific development through their religious reforms.

2. The Glorious Revolution in England and the American War of Independence:

The Christian faith played an important role in political transformations in both Britain and the United States. Many leaders during the Glorious Revolution and the American War of Independence were devout Christians who used Christian moral and ethical guidance to further the causes of democracy and freedom.

3. The Abolitionist Movement and the Civil Rights Movement:

Anglo-American Christians were at the forefront of the abolition of slavery and the fight for civil rights. Christians such as William Wilberforce actively promoted the abolitionist cause, and in the United States, Martin Luther King Jr. based his struggle for racial equality on his Christian faith.

What Should Disciples in Various Fields in China Do at This Stage?

1. Strengthen Faith Education:

Develop systematic faith-education programs within the church to help believers deepen their understanding of biblical doctrine and enhance their spiritual growth. Utilize modern technology to provide online courses and small-group discussions to broaden the scope of education.

2. Actively Engage in Social Services:

Organize volunteer teams to carry out community services—such as educational support, poverty alleviation, and medical assistance—to display Christ's love through action. Encourage believers to demonstrate Christian ethics in their professions, influencing those around them.

3. Enhance Social Responsibility:

Keep abreast of social hot topics and public affairs, express opinions through legal channels, and promote social justice and

moral values. The church can serve as a platform for discussing and addressing social issues, pooling wisdom to seek solutions.

4. Emphasize Personal Witness:

Believers should be consistent in their words and actions, living out the pattern of Christ in daily life to serve as examples for others. Whether at home, in the workplace, or within the community, they should reflect Christian love, justice, and humility.

5. Respond to the Challenges of Daily Life:

Under economic pressures, the church should offer practical support such as financial guidance, employment training, and counseling. Teach believers to seek inner peace and strength through prayer and faith, stand firm in their beliefs, and actively face life's challenges.

This article is only an exploration of these issues and represents amateur opinions. Disciples in various fields are facing many challenges at this stage. It is hoped that through strengthening faith education, actively participating in social services, enhancing social responsibility, and emphasizing personal witness, the Great Commission of Jesus can be manifested to impact society. Although current political and social restrictions prevent believers from engaging in social affairs as widely as Anglo-American Christians, it is believed that these are temporary limitations. Disciples can still trust in the Lord and, within their own capacities, bring about positive change and influence in society.

Let us pray together for this!

Obey God or Indulge the Inner Satan?

Scripture Passage:

Now Satan stood up against Israel, and moved David to number Israel. So David said to Joab and to the leaders of the people, “Go, number Israel from Beersheba to Dan, and bring the number of them to me that I may know it. ” And Joab answered, “May the Lord make His people a hundred times more than they are. But, my lord the king, are they not all my lord’s servants? Why then does my lord require this thing? Why should he be a cause of guilt in Israel?” Nevertheless the king’s word prevailed against Joab. Therefore Joab departed and went throughout all Israel and came to Jerusalem. Then Joab gave the sum of the number of the people to David. All Israel had one million one hundred thousand men who drew the sword, and Judah had four hundred and seventy thousand men who drew the sword. But he did not count Levi and Benjamin among them, for the king’s word was abominable to Joab. (1 Chronicles 21:1-6 NKJV)



Image Description: This painting depicts the scene from 1 Chronicles 21:1-6, showing King David ordering Joab to number the people of Israel under the influence of Satan. David appears deep in thought and internally conflicted, while Joab looks reluctant and worried. In the background, one can see the silhouettes of the Israelite army, emphasizing the scale of the census. The ancient historical architecture and landscapes of Jerusalem are also portrayed, setting an overall atmosphere of tension and moral conflict.

What Does the Passage Say?

The passage clearly states that Satan arose to attack Israel and incited David to conduct a census of the people. David's decision was not made out of fear or obedience to God; rather, it was prompted by Satan's temptation and provocation. Despite God's repeated demonstrations of protection and provision for Israel, David focused on the military strength of his kingdom. He hoped to secure a sense of safety and pride by assessing the size of the armed forces—instead of relying on the Lord's power.

Joab, on the other hand, clearly recognized that numbering the people was not in accordance with God's will. His objection stemmed from his reverence for God, yet David's command prevailed, and ultimately, David's decision brought sin upon Israel, incurring God's wrath and punishment. This error affected not only David personally but had negative consequences for the entire nation of Israel.

Why Does It Seem That David Mistrusted God?

Since the topic is about trust in the Lord, it is necessary first to clarify the mention of Satan in the passage ("Satan arose to attack Israel and incited David to number them"). What kind of "demon" is Satan supposed to be? How is he able to attack and incite both Israel and David? For new believers, it might seem abstract—even to the point of imagining Satan as simply the "troublemaker" behind our misdeeds or as a convenient scapegoat when things go awry.

In truth, as one reads more of the Bible, it becomes clear that the Satan mentioned in the text also symbolizes those thoughts deep within our minds—ideas that arise from personal pride, covetousness, and carnal lusts; all of which fall under the "domain" of Satan's influence. When we humble ourselves and patiently wait upon the circumstances God brings about, the Lord begins to work on our behalf.

If you agree with this perspective, consider this supporting verse: *"For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world."* (1 John 2:16, NKJV)

With this understanding, it becomes easier to grasp the opening scripture. After a series of victories led by the Lord, David did not credit God for the accomplishments. Instead, he attributed the strength and valor of the Israelite army to his own achievements—thus fundamentally denying the redemption and guidance that God had bestowed upon Israel.

In further reflection, God's grace and power far exceed anything we can control. Both David and the nation of Israel were meant to constantly depend on God's provision and protection—not on their own strength or resources.

Beloved brothers and sisters, when we recognize that pride is the root of many errors and sins, we ought to remain humble and acknowledge our limitations, relying instead on God's wisdom and guidance. In making decisions, we should listen to the counsel and admonitions of others—especially those voices that align with God's will. Joab's objection stemmed from his fear of the Lord; yet David did not heed his warning, and this disobedience led to grave consequences. Satan—the very embodiment of **pride within us**—often tempts us to stray from the right path. We must remain vigilant, strengthening our ability to resist temptation through prayer and spiritual disciplines. When we err, we should courageously admit our mistakes and accept the consequences. David's eventual repentance and plea for God's forgiveness serve as an example for all of us.



(Image Description: Obey God or Yield to Satan?)

Conclusion

God's guidance and Satan's disruptions reside in every heart. Whether God or Satan is ultimately in charge depends on our choices. As Proverbs 4:23 warns, *"Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it."*

David's error was in failing to trust in God and instead relying on his own strength, which led to serious consequences. We must learn from his mistake, always trust in the Lord, humble ourselves, remain alert to temptation, and heed any admonition that is in line with God's will. Only by doing so can we avoid falling into sin and continue on the path of justice and truth.

Let us pray together for this!

Self-Media Gospel: From Conveyors of Truth to Conduits of Living Water

There is a slogan for a bottled water ad: “We don’t produce water; we’re merely the transporters of nature.” The idea is that they deliver nature’s pure mineral water directly to customers, satisfying people’s need for natural water while only earning an honest living. It sounds very heartwarming, doesn’t it? In the era of overt advertisements, such straightforward messaging gives a vivid, immersive impression and sparks an eager desire to purchase—an effective ad, indeed. However, the spreading of the Gospel is not merely about “transporting” biblical knowledge; it requires much more: the transmission of the living message of the spirit and heartfelt testimony.

Under today’s self-media trend, the way the Gospel is disseminated might look similar to hard-sell advertising yet is fundamentally different. There seems to be no catchy phrase that instantly excites someone to learn about the Gospel. Gospel transmission is not just about carrying biblical knowledge—it must deliver the “living water” contained in Scripture to disciples in its full, authentic form, while also testifying to the beautiful relationship with God, the love invested, and the deep emotional impact on the hearers. The biblical truth that can be spread is always made effective through the work of the Holy Spirit. Just like the metaphor about water in Scripture:

“Jesus answered and said to her, “Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.””(John 4:13-14 NKJV)

Without the Holy Spirit flowing like living water, the transmission of the Gospel loses its flavor.

That living water comes from the love of the Heavenly Father. Without the transmission of love, disciples will not experience the moving power of God or the Holy Spirit simply through the sharing of biblical knowledge. Breaking down verses on their own reduces one to being merely a “transporter,” and if the water becomes polluted during its transport—that is, if after hearing

the message people still feel “thirsty”—then it is not a conduit of living water at all. I am not denying the benefits of in-depth Bible study or exegesis; rather, I want to offer some observations from the perspective of Gospel dissemination on preaching and on the conditions necessary for sharing the Gospel via social platforms. I look forward to discussing these points with fellow brothers and sisters:

What Should the Gospel Messenger Pay Attention To?

The term “Gospel messenger” broadly refers to pastors, deacons, ministry coworkers, evangelistic workers, and others engaged in spreading the Gospel. Their responsibility is to break down the truths of Scripture in a righteous manner and lead disciples to understand and apply them correctly in life. Consider the following biblical passages (the English words in parentheses are taken as reference from the NKJV):

- “And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.” (Ephesians 4:11)
- “And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.” (Luke 4:20)
- “Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:...” (Philippians 1:1)
- “On the next day we who were Paul’s companions departed and came to Caesarea, and entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him...” (Acts 21:8)

Many of the parables and hidden meanings in the Bible need to be expounded by the Gospel messenger in conjunction with the actual life circumstances of the disciples. Otherwise, it can lead to misunderstandings and prevent Scripture’s truths from being practically applied in the lives of believers.

1. Interpreting the Meaning of Parables

The Bible contains many parables which, in different historical and cultural contexts, carry unique meanings. For instance, in Matthew 13, Jesus tells several parables about the kingdom of

heaven—such as the Parable of the Sower, the Parable of the Mustard Seed, and the Parable of the Yeast. Gospel messengers need to carefully explain the background, content, and allegorical significance of these parables so that disciples can understand the message Jesus was conveying. For example, the Parable of the Sower reveals how God’s word produces varied results in different hearts, while the Parable of the Mustard Seed demonstrates the process by which the kingdom of heaven grows from something small into a mighty presence.

2. Explaining Biblical Teachings in the Context of Real Life

Gospel messengers are not only required to explain biblical teachings, but also to offer concrete life guidance that helps disciples apply these teachings in reality. For example, when facing family conflicts, a Gospel messenger might cite Ephesians 4:26-27:

“In your anger do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.”

They could then advise disciples on how to remain calm during family disputes, to solve problems through communication and prayer, and to prevent anger from damaging family relationships. Similarly, Ephesians 4:29 states:

“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.”

A Gospel messenger might explain how to apply this verse at work and at home—encouraging disciples to use their words to build up others and to foster harmonious relationships.

3. Preventing Misinterpretations and Misapplications of Scripture

Incorrect understanding and application of biblical teachings can bring about negative consequences. Gospel messengers need to guide disciples to avoid taking verses out of context or distorting biblical teachings to support personal biases or erroneous behaviors. For example, some might mistakenly use passages from 1 Corinthians 7:1-9 to justify unhealthy views on marriage. The Gospel messenger should carefully explain Paul’s true intent in those verses, emphasizing mutual love and respect between

spouses, and thereby preventing misunderstandings or misuse of Scripture.

4. Being Wary of Fragmented, Personal “Inspirational” Shares

Gospel messengers often have considerable influence within their communities and among friends, especially those esteemed pastors. When they share a few sentences that moved them during their devotional time on social media or in groups, differing personal experiences can lead others to form divergent interpretations. Some might even feel that such words are at odds with their own life situations, leaving them feeling they could never reach that level—thus weakening their faith.

If you wish “to let what moves your spirit move others even more,” it is recommended that you share not only the moving words but also your understanding of them and the insights you’ve gleaned through personal reflection. This prevents the “conveyor” style of sharing from giving others a one-sided view. In the presence of Jesus Christ, every individual must examine themselves, humbly “convey” His teachings, and avoid using seemingly profound “golden sentences” as a means to elevate one’s own spiritual stature in the eyes of others. Always remind yourself that

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23, NKJV)

Only by asking the Lord to use you can each share be transformed into a guiding example—a servant-like guide—between people and God rather than the work of a Pharisee who usurps God’s place or steals His glory.

Can Being a Conduit of Living Water Save Lives?

The above points are meant to remind Gospel messengers what to keep in mind when preaching and sharing Gospel messages. Frankly, no one can guarantee that every sharing will achieve all these aims, but setting such markers helps both the messenger and the audience maintain oversight. On the journey of being a disciple of the Lord, there are many things to be done, and there is no need to be in a rush. Becoming a true conduit of living water is itself a process of spiritual maturation. When we are willing to set aside our own “wisdom” and quiet our hearts, our

Lord will be willing to face whatever comes next with us. Isn't that kind of life powerful? Consider the following additional points:

1. Testimony of Reverence for God

Demonstrate your reverence for and loyalty to God. Show through your actions how you follow God's teachings and seek His will in every decision. Proverbs 9:10 states:

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding."

Gospel messengers should lead by example, showing reverence for God and adhering to divine wisdom. Many disciples feel unsure about what "reverence for God" truly means or what form God might take: do we expect thunder and lightning accompanied by beams of sunlight in a dark sky, or should we picture a Harry Potter-like magical spectacle? Neither is the case.

From another perspective, it is about humbling oneself and looking outward. When faced with life, work, or dire circumstances, set aside your emotions and judgments and simply say, "Lord, please lead me!" Then wait and listen for the inner prompting and inspiration that tells you what to do. And if you still don't know what to do... then "go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly." (Matthew 6:6 NKJV)

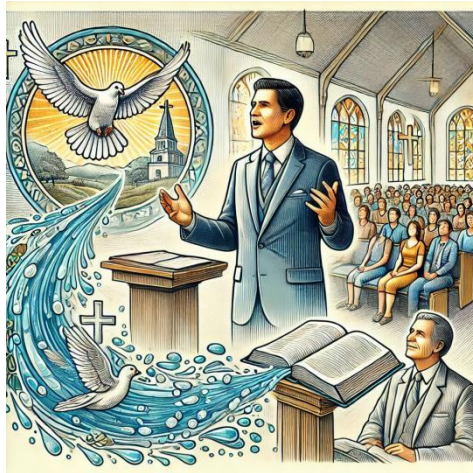
This is the power and mystery of prayer—it means that a person is willing to lay aside every thought and devote themselves wholly in humble supplication before Him, and the Father in heaven, pleased by such devotion, will surely provide the bread that saves lives.

2. Love and Care

The preaching and writing of Gospel messengers should be filled with genuine love and concern for the congregation. By caring for the real-life needs and situations of people, offering practical help and encouragement, the messenger demonstrates how Christ's love works. As Jesus said in John 13:34-35:

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

When Gospel messengers and church coworkers share their tasks in unity and division of labor through caring actions, they display love and comfort toward the congregation. In the process, they learn to set aside self-centered pride and discard any false, elevated façade. This helps everyone realize that the Gospel we share isn’t some unattainable set of doctrines but is the living power that becomes the source of our life. The love and care expressed are not merely reflections of our personal affection but, in unknowingly becoming conduits of the Heavenly Father’s love, become the vibrant manifestation of that living life.



(Testimony of Life-Influencing Witnesses: Being a Conduit for God’s Living Water)

Conclusion

The mission of a Gospel messenger is not only to teach biblical truth but also to inspire the congregation—with a personal life testimony and a deep reverence for God—to understand and practice their faith more profoundly. By sharing genuine life experiences and heartfelt impressions, Gospel messengers can help the hearers, under God’s guidance, find the motivation and joy to live out the beauty and power of their faith.

Perhaps we can change that water ad's slogan to: "We must not hold the truth aloft in pride; we are merely the conduits of the Heavenly Father's living water."

May every Gospel messenger become a beacon in the hearts of the congregation, guiding them on their journey of faith with courage and bringing glory to God's name. Amen.

Encouraging the Practical Application of Biblical Truth in Conjunction with Eastern Cultural Backgrounds



As Christianity spreads around the world—and especially in regions such as Asia, Africa, and Latin America in recent years—a number of outstanding pastors in domestic churches have gradually come to realize something important from years of ministry experience. Although Western Christian thought has gained widespread acceptance among the masses in modern times, there remains significant room for expanding its depth and breadth in social life compared to its propagation in other developing countries. Therefore, rethinking the current model of Gospel transmission and rooting the practice of Christian faith in China’s Eastern cultural context and social development model is an issue that domestic Christians and church coworkers must seriously consider. In reflecting on history, we can draw wisdom from missionaries such as Matteo Ricci and Timothy Richard, who in their efforts to spread the Gospel took care to understand and respect Eastern culture—a valuable lesson for us today.

1. Lessons from History

The Example of Matteo Ricci:

- Matteo Ricci was a Jesuit missionary in China during the late Ming and early Qing dynasties. In spreading the Gospel, he emphasized understanding and integrating into Chinese culture.
- He learned Chinese, adopted traditional Chinese clothing, and respected local customs and rituals. He even sought to

combine Christian doctrines with Confucian thought—authoring works such as the *"The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven"*. Such initiatives greatly enhanced the acceptance of the Gospel among various classes in modern China.

The Efforts of Timothy Richard:

- Timothy Richard was one of the prominent missionaries in China in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Not only did he devote himself to spreading Christianity, but he also made significant contributions to China's social and educational fields.
- He participated in numerous social reforms, helped establish a modern educational system in China, founded many schools, and, during difficult times, aided in establishing Yenching University—which later became one of the pioneers in Chinese higher education, educating many distinguished scholars and leaders. His example shows that attention must be paid not only to religious education but also to the cultivation of well-rounded talent with modern scientific knowledge and humanistic qualities—a model for modern education in China.

Insights from the Edinburgh Missionary Conference:

- The 1910 Edinburgh World Missionary Conference was a milestone in the history of Christian missions. The conference emphasized the importance of respecting and understanding different cultures during the propagation of the Gospel, advocating that the message of the Gospel should be integrated with local culture rather than simply transplanting Western cultural forms.
- Discussions at the conference addressed how to effectively spread the Gospel on a global scale, underscoring the importance of respecting local cultures and fostering the autonomous development of local churches. Some missionaries at the conference famously stated that "culture is not the enemy; missions should respect the cultures of different regions." This perspective is particularly important for the Chinese church to heed.

2. Integrating Biblical Truth into Chinese Culture

Understanding the Essence of Chinese Culture:

- Chinese culture is underpinned by deep philosophical, ethical, and moral foundations—such as the Confucian values of

“benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and faith,” the Daoist concept of “following the natural way,” and the Buddhist emphasis on “compassion” and “wisdom.” With the popularity of short videos, lectures on these philosophical schools are emerging continuously, attracting many followers and practitioners.

- Over thousands of years, especially since the Tang Dynasty, Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism have played indispensable roles in shaping Chinese culture and social governance. It is recommended that church coworkers deeply study and understand these cultural traditions, drawing from their essence so as to better appreciate the cognitive foundation and boundaries of people who uphold these cultural values. This approach facilitates integrating the truth of the Gospel into that cultural framework—rather than outright rejecting traditional culture without discernment.

Explaining Biblical Teachings in the Context of Everyday Life – Examples:

- When facing family conflicts, one might reference Ephesians 4:26–27: “In your anger do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.” Such a passage can guide disciples on how to stay calm in the midst of family strife, using communication and prayer to resolve issues so that anger does not destroy family relationships.
- Similarly, Ephesians 4:29 states: “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.” This can be explained as practical instruction for the workplace and home—encouraging disciples to use their words to edify others and help establish harmonious interpersonal relationships.

3. The Church’s Role in Daily Worship and Instruction

Worship and Teaching:

- In worship services, the church should emphasize instructing believers on how to practice their faith in everyday life. For example, through sermons and Bible studies, disciples

can be helped to understand how to embody the example of Christ in their work, family, and social interactions.

- Every time the congregation gathers, practical testimonies should be shared to show how fellow believers have met challenges and difficulties in life while glorifying God in various spheres.

Self-Examination in Daily Life:

- The church should teach believers to engage in regular self-examination, to identify and correct errors, and to use biblical teachings to discern which behaviors or attitudes constitute sin, or are the result of Satan's bondage and influence. For instance, when handling work or family matters, one should examine whether actions and attitudes align with Christian doctrine, and how biblical truth can be used to set things right.
- Providing concrete examples and methods—such as setting aside a few minutes each evening to review one's day and reflect on areas in need of change, followed by prayer for forgiveness and help—can assist believers in developing a habit of self-examination.

Learning from Historical Theologians:

- Believers should study the writings of great theologians from history, such as Augustine, Martin Luther, and John Calvin. Their works offer profound theological insights and practical guidance, helping believers to better understand and apply biblical truth.
- The church can organize book clubs or study groups in which believers read these theological works together, sharing insights and experiences.

Conclusion

Regardless of the form of worship—whether public or private—church coworkers have undoubtedly encountered many challenges while transmitting the Gospel under either a “domestically distinctive” model or a purely “Westernized” approach. Fundamentally, the emphasis should be on integrating the mindset and receptive capacity of people shaped by China's Eastern cultural background with biblical truth, and closely linking that truth with social practice. This is especially

important when considering the profound influence of big data and AI products on our daily lives and work, as well as the need to address current social issues related to people's livelihoods.

By learning from the wisdom of predecessors like Matteo Ricci and Timothy Richard, and by keeping pace with the changes of our times, we can gradually enable Chinese Christians and ordinary believers to better accept the teachings of Christianity in light of our own cultural and social backgrounds. In contemporary China's political, economic, cultural, and ethical landscape, we should practice our faith and become active practitioners of the Great Commission in this new era—bearing witness to God's glory at the intersection of faith and culture, and ultimately bringing honor to His name.

Let us pray together for this!

What Exactly Is Satan, That “Demon”?



(Satan is not a literal ghost – don’t be misled by fantasy tales. He is the “self” within our hearts.)

Dear brothers and sisters,

In our life of faith, the disruptive influence of Satan (Satan, שטן) is everywhere. Many Christians misunderstand the depictions of Satan or the devil in the Bible—often, because of various anthropomorphic descriptions, they end up viewing Satan as a concrete individual. If considered a tangible being, one might imagine him as a hostile enemy working against us. In truth, however, Satan is merely a literary term that sums up the many evil thoughts and intentions manifesting in different people and situations. More often than not, it refers to the greed or the evil side within our own hearts.

The definition of “Satan” also makes this clear: he is described as “the chief evil spirit, adversary of God and humanity,” that is, the head of evil spirits and the antithesis to the one true God and human righteousness. Today, let us explore the various forms Satan appears in Scripture, and also remind our disciples not to seek truth without first repenting of their sins—lest they fall under Satan’s bondage (that is, be bound by their own evil and greedy thoughts).

Various Forms of Satan in Daily Life

1. Deception and Temptation

- **The Serpent in Genesis:** In Genesis 3:1–5, the serpent tempts Eve to eat the forbidden fruit—symbolizing deception and seduction that lead people away from God’s will and into the pursuit of their own desires. For easier understanding, imagine a scenario in a primordial forest where a man and a woman are managing everything without an awakened consciousness; though their outward appearance may resemble that of God’s image, in essence they are no different from any animal. It is the woman who first doubts God’s command not to eat the forbidden fruit—questioning why she should not partake in fruits that are attractive, nourishing, and thought to confer wisdom. Her bold defiance brings about a new clarity in discerning right from wrong; Adam also eats, and in doing so they incur a perpetual punishment passed down from generation to generation. Here, the serpent stands as the concrete manifestation of human greed—and is, in today’s terms, another name for Satan.

- **The Ancient Serpent’s Temptation:** In Revelation 12:9, Satan is referred to as “that ancient serpent,” symbolizing his role in leading humanity toward carnal desires and worldly pleasures.

- **Tempting Jesus:** In Matthew 4:1–11, Satan attempts to tempt Jesus through material enticements and promises of power—symbolizing both the lure of material gain and the desire for authority. According to the explanation offered at the beginning of this text, Satan here could be understood as representing the initial stirrings of temptation within Jesus as a human, a fleeting pull of the heart. Yet that momentary impulse was soon supplanted by His mission of “The Word Made Flesh.” (I confess that such a subtle transformation—a mere “psychological shift”—is beyond what I could personally muster; if I were in His place I’d surely have exploited my “divine self” to claim everything, in other words, I would have succumbed.)

2. Testing and Doubt

- **In Job (Job 1:6–12):** Satan appears as the tester, questioning Job’s faith and attempting to shake his confidence through suffering. In real life, similar scenarios are all too common. If we set aside the heavenly dialogues found in Job 1:6–12 and 2:1–7 about God and Satan, and focus solely on Job’s

earthly ordeals, we see that although Job—an ordinary man unaware of what was happening above—endured debates with his friends and even moments of discontent toward God, he never sinned with his lips. In the end, he humbled himself under the might and wisdom of God. This reality makes me feel ashamed—even if some believe themselves blameless and immune to disaster, let alone a “definite sinner.”

- **Tempting the People of Israel:** Satan employs various means to test the Israelites, causing them to doubt God’s faithfulness and power (see Numbers 21:4–9). Similarly, doctrines that arise from doubting God’s love and might—along with idolatry and occult practices—are all manifestations of turning away from Him.



3. Pride and Self-Centeredness

In Isaiah 14:12–15, Satan’s fall is portrayed as the result of pride, symbolizing the human tendency toward self-centeredness and arrogance that prevents us from humbly relying on God. In my view, beyond sins arising from basic survival needs, pride constitutes perhaps the gravest sin. It manifests in a desire to only hear flattering words, an inability to accept constructive criticism, a propensity to lecture others despite insufficient spiritual preparation, and an inclination to argue endlessly simply because someone else behaves differently.

4. Anger and Resentment

Ephesians 4:26–27 warns us not to let anger become a tool for Satan to ruin interpersonal relationships. Yet we should not simply shift blame onto Satan—when you become angry or lose your temper, Satan is not standing by dictating your actions. Much of our anger originates from pride and the derivatives of the self, not necessarily from others. Resentment, meanwhile, is often the outcome of anger not being “acknowledged.” Satan uses resentment and jealousy to drive people away from God’s love and peace (as illustrated in Genesis 4:5–7, in the story of Cain and Abel). He also capitalizes on self-centered behaviors—such as hatred, strife, anger, cliques, and dissension—to further his own ends. When a person’s heart is full of anger and resentment, how can they possibly think of God?

5. Fear and Anxiety

In 1 Peter 5:8, Satan is likened to “a roaring lion, prowling about, seeking whom he may devour,” symbolizing an ever-present enemy who seeks to destroy faith through fear and anxiety. When people encounter frightening circumstances, they often become anxious and unsettled because they cannot control how situations unfold or what the eventual outcome will be. Yet when you realize that everything is in God’s hands, what is there to fear?

6. Falsehood and Deception

In John 8:44, Satan is called “the father of lies,” as he leads people away from truth and into sin through deceit. For instance, one highly upvoted answer on a search engine about “Why do people lie?” suggests that people lie 43% of the time to avoid harm and 18% of the time to gain profit. We can understand this as indicating that when people resort to lying—justifying their actions under the guise of self-interest—they often work in ways that, intentionally or not, align with Satan’s agenda. Such deceptive practices rarely get recognized as part of Satan’s work because they are masked under a veneer of self-justification.

7. Transgressive Carnal Desires

Immorality, obscenity, debauchery, drunkenness, and riotous revelries all stem from an unchecked lust and the overindulgence of the very desires God originally intended as a gift for proper

enjoyment. God's command was for humanity to "be fruitful and multiply" and to rule over all He created. Yet when people, driven by inner greed, seek pleasure without restraint—thus violating God's established order—they stray from His intentions and fall under the disruptive influence of what we call Satan. Moreover, this includes the covetous longing of the eyes: bitterness, jealousy, and intense anger when one cannot have what is seen—or when one takes things for granted. A historical example is found in the actions of Absalom, David's son, in his dealings with Tamar (refer to 2 Samuel chapters 13–19), which nearly led to the downfall of David's reign.

Do Not Neglect Repenting of Your Own Sins

From the seven aspects of Satan's manifestations described above, it is not Satan himself but our own greed, pride, and the emotions and falsehoods that spring from them that we must be wary of. Satan is simply a placeholder term. From my own experience I would say: While Satan certainly deserves denunciation, if you desire a life of pure heart and clean hands you must close your eyes, fall prostrate before God, examine yourself, and repent of these sins.

1. **Recognizing Satan's Bondage:**

Since the very nature of Satan is actually our own sinfulness, we should no longer shift the blame onto him. Fundamentally, it is the person whose heart is far from God—using survival as an excuse to break away from the relationship with Him—who, when confronted with various temptations and deceptions, distances themselves from God's teachings and seeks excuses (lies) to justify personal greed and pride. We must clearly understand that while Satan might indeed lurk around us (for example, in the form of the desires and pressures imposed by others or the environment), it is primarily the greed and emotions stirring within our own hearts that disciples must guard against.

2. **Repentance Is the Key to Liberation:**

Scripture teaches that we must repent of our sins to break free from Satan's bondage. This idea is easily understood in light of the explanations discussed above, isn't it? 1 John 1:9 states, "If

we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Repentance is not only a confession before God but also a renewal of our soul. Just as one washes off the dust from one’s skin through a bath, interacting with countless sinful desires can entangle our hearts with even worse cravings. So why not give your inner self a cleansing? Repentance. As more disciples and people come to repent, God’s righteousness will increasingly be made manifest. This is also why we must pray for our country, government, companies, families, and all spheres of life. Those who claim that Satan rules this secular world are, in fact, often covering up their own greed and wrongdoing. Let me say it again: Satan does not exist in the heavens hovering about—He resides in every human heart. As the number of repentant souls increases, people’s eyes will grow ever clearer, and they will discover that true wisdom comes from the Most High God, who is the true ruler of this world.

3. Do Not Pursue Truth Without Repentance:

A widespread problem in many churches—both public and private—is that they emphasize worship, Bible reading, and prayer, yet neglect the importance of repentance. When sin is largely replaced by grace without a serious confrontation of wrongdoing, the resulting worship and Bible study merely desecrate God’s teachings. One might say that if everyone from the top down does not take repentance seriously and does not testify to its transformative power, they are simply covering up their own sins. Worship and a pursuit of truth without repentance are tantamount to chasing after lies.

From our discussion, we come to understand that breaking free from Satan’s disruptions is incredibly difficult—difficult because we cannot let go of our inner greed. Yet compared to the sacrifice of Christ for us, it is not insurmountable. Through prayer, those seven manifestations (and possibly others) become our starting points for correction. Pursuing truth is a fundamental mission for Christians, but if we neglect to repent of our sins, we will fall into the traps of everyday life. As Jesus said, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but

he who does the will of My Father in heaven.” (Matthew 7:21, NKJV)

Living the joyful life that God intends for us depends on continual prayer and self-examination. Pray every day, seeking God’s guidance and help, reflecting on your actions and thoughts, and identifying as well as correcting mistakes. For more than a decade I myself was bound by my sins—so much so that I could not gather the resolve to repent, and in my laborious state, I suffered both physical and spiritual damage. It was not until last year that I gradually realized I must let go of those desires and pride that weighed on my mind, and begin to act according to God’s leading. The results became evident, for my whole being grew lighter and more joyful!

Dear brothers and sisters, I am moved to write this article about Satan out of the experience of repentance. Though I have not reached perfection, God has already granted me the peace of joy. May each one of us, under the guidance of God, overcome the temptations and trials—and above all, lay down that inexplicable pride in our hearts. Only by submitting and humbling ourselves before Him will we have the opportunity to truly live as disciples of Christ and enjoy the joyful life that God grants.

What exactly is Satan? Remove the greed and pride in our hearts, and he is nothing. Repentance is the prerequisite for pursuing holiness and for emulating Christ:

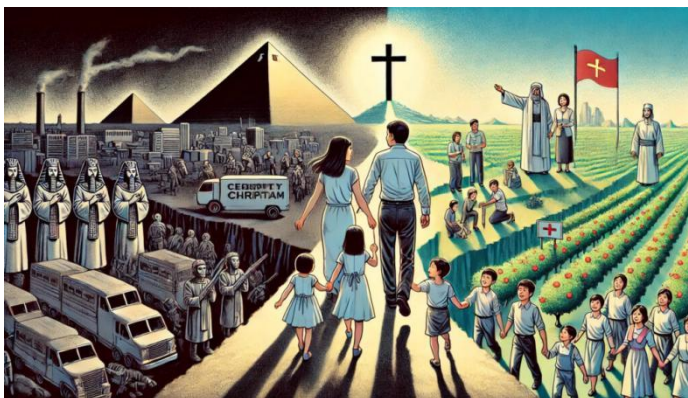
“Be holy, for I am holy.” (1 Peter 1:16b, NKJV)

A brief note:

Some friends have reminded me that aside from the inner Satan, there is also the idea that he truly exists in the spiritual realm as the fallen angel created by God. I tend to agree with that view. However, if I were to elaborate further, I fear I might not do it justice—perhaps that “real existence” in the spiritual realm is simply the external manifestation of the inner Satan in one’s actions, much like what Jung described as the “evil” within the collective unconscious... I hope to write an article further exploring this aspect of Satan in the future.

May the peace and wisdom of God always be with each one of us.

The Time to Become Free Is Nearly Gone: The Mission of Apostle John in the New Era



Many Chinese Christians today still face a dilemma. They long to escape oppression and injustice, yet they also fear the challenges and responsibilities that come with freedom. This predicament is comparable to the experience of the Israelites when they left Egypt. They despised slavery, yet they were afraid to leave the familiar environment in pursuit of an “unseen” freedom. Such contradictions stem from a deep-seated fear of change and a resistance to repentance.

The “Lying Flat” Youth and the Abandoned Elderly

Today, many young people—our children, the children of our friends and neighbors—live in an environment defined by blind pursuit and fierce competition. The so-called “struggle” and relentless efforts of the past three to four generations over the last 70 years have left behind a vast “wilderness of faith” and enormous pressures on daily life. As a result, many young people choose to “lie flat,” rejecting the all-consuming, competitive nature of society. People bury themselves in earning a living, giving up the struggle and willingly becoming society’s outcasts. Society grows apathetic, mutual support is lacking—and on the streets, when someone falls, no one dares to help; toxic food products abound. Is it not these very generations that have created such a situation? In this reality, if the generation of parents (especially those born in the ’50s–’70s) do not initiate change, then these children will face the same entrapments, trapped in a cycle of a “uniform, rigid mindset.”

Sadly, many of these parents, though proclaiming themselves as Christians, have achieved little. They have neither set a proper example of true discipleship in both faith and action, nor have they resisted joining the “silent majority” that conforms to the times. Moreover, the church itself often avoids political and social hot topics, lacks concern for social justice, and fails to provide a correct set of values or life standards for the spiritual upbringing of children. The net result is that even if young people find their way into the church, they become even more confused upon witnessing the timidity of their pastors, feeling lost and directionless.

The Responsibility of the Parental Generation: Repentance and Living as Disciples of Christ

For those born in the '50s, '60s, and '70s, time is truly short. Having been enslaved for too long, many have almost forgotten what it means to be free. Until you break free from the “Egypt” in your heart, your children might also get lost in this vast wilderness of authoritarianism. As Christians, the parental generation must first repent and become true disciples of Christ—living in His image and becoming free. As the Bible teaches,

“Therefore be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect.”
(Matthew 5:48)

This perfection does not imply flawlessness but rather the pursuit of excellence in both faith and practice, courageously accepting the mission entrusted to us. In doing so, parents can become spiritual role models for their children. By demonstrating the power and beauty of the Christian faith through their actions, they can help their children and even the neighborhood’s children break out of “lying flat” and embrace genuine freedom.

1. Living the Way of the Lord: Caring for One’s Neighbors

Under authoritarian rule, living out the gospel is not easy. Yet as Christians, we must always remember Christ’s teaching: care for and help those who suffer; if you cannot help, at least do not compete for resources with them. As Apostle John reminds us,

“If anyone claims, ‘I love God,’ yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For whoever does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.” (1 John 4:20)

Becoming the Apostle John of our new era means actively participating in social welfare initiatives and addressing the pain of the people rather than being content with a quiet, uneventful life. This is not only the practice of our Christian faith but also a call for social justice. Christians can participate in volunteer service and community-building efforts to embody the love and compassion of Christ.

2. Calling for Repentance: The Mission of Proclaiming the Gospel

Repentance is a core element of the Christian faith and an essential mission of every believer. In modern society, many are blinded by materialism and power, neglecting the salvation of their souls. We have the responsibility, by both word and deed, to lead people to recognize their sins and to seek God’s forgiveness and salvation. Gospel proclamation is not simply about transmitting information but about showing through our actions the transformative power of faith. As the Apostle Paul stated,

“I have become all things to all people, that by all possible means I might save some.” (1 Corinthians 9:23)

Start with yourself. Remember how Jesus commanded His disciples to preach, “So they went out and preached that people should repent.” (Mark 6:12, NKJV). Begin with your own repentance.

3. A New China Vision of Widespread Gospel: The Promise of a Repentant Future

When more and more people are willing to genuinely repent and leave behind their inner “Egypt,” China will usher in a new era—a society full of love and care where everyone looks out for one another; where social welfare flourishes and Christians shine in every field as champions of justice and ambassadors of spiritual salvation.

In this New China, young people will no longer be forced into “lying flat” but will be filled with hope and strength, courageously pursuing their dreams. The parental generation,

through living out their faith, will set a proper example and help their children find the meaning and direction of life. As the Bible instructs,

“In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:16)

This generation must change the current situation and reclaim the lost courage and love, reestablishing trust and a spirit of mutual support. Only then can we truly emerge from the “Egypt” of our hearts and build a Gospel China imbued with love and justice.

Conclusion

Becoming free people who emulate Christ is the mission and inescapable responsibility of this generation of Chinese Christians. Whether under strict national standards or in everyday life, our faith must guide us to face the challenges of our latter days with courage. Like the Apostle John of this new era, hold fast to your faith and do not become another casualty in the wilderness. Instead, be the followers and doers of justice in our time—uniting with our descendants, families, and neighbors as we follow the footsteps of Caleb and Joshua into a Gospel-filled China.

Let us pray together for this transformation!

On Hayek's Critique of Majority Rule, Collectivism, and Related Ideas

This is a short piece on economics that briefly introduces some key aspects of Friedrich Hayek's economic and philosophical ideas. For a fuller understanding, one is encouraged to read his complete works. Note that the image accompanying the original text is not associated with any organization or individual, so please do not attribute it to anyone in particular.

Friedrich Hayek, one of the most important economists and political philosophers of the 20th century, is renowned for his staunch defense of liberalism and market economies. In his work *The Road to Serfdom*, Hayek offers a detailed critique of concepts such as minority compliance with majority rule, collectivism, and communist ideologies.

Hayek's Critique

Majority Rule and Its Perils: The idea of minority compliance with majority rule originates from democratic systems—first seen in the ancient Athenian democracy and later widely disseminated following the French Revolution. This principle is designed to ensure that decisions are democratic and representative, preventing power from concentrating in the hands of a few and encouraging broad public participation. Hayek argued, however, that while the principle of majority rule may seem democratic in theory, it conceals significant dangers. Decisions based solely on the will of the majority often disregard individual rights and freedoms, potentially leading to tyranny. In a democracy, the majority can legally strip minorities of their fundamental rights and freedoms.

Collectivism: Collectivist thought originated in the 19th-century socialist movement, represented by figures such as Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. After the Russian Revolution, collectivism became a core ideology in the Soviet Union and other socialist states. Its goal was to eliminate capitalist exploitation through collective ownership and planned economies, thereby achieving equality and social justice. Hayek's criticism of collectivism focused on its suppression of individual freedom. Collectivism places the interests of the whole society above those of the

individual and demands that individuals obey collective decisions. According to Hayek, this practice effectively strips individuals of their autonomy and creativity. It also leads to centralized economic planning that lacks the flexibility and responsiveness of market mechanisms. Ultimately, the human desire for freedom will always seek a way out of such rigidity.



Communism: Communism, as systematically articulated by Marx and Engels in *The Communist Manifesto*, was later implemented in nations like the Soviet Union and China. Its ultimate aim is to create a classless society by abolishing private property and market economies, thereby ensuring abundant material provision and absolute equality. Hayek's critique of communism was particularly severe. He saw it as a utopian fantasy that sought to eliminate inequality and injustice by doing away with private property and the market—but in practice, such efforts invariably lead to totalitarianism and economic collapse. While centrally planned economies may serve a temporary function when a society is still in its early stages and its members lack knowledge, their long-term application cannot effectively harness the distributed knowledge and resources of society. Instead, such systems tend to waste resources and significantly reduce production efficiency, crushing individual freedom and distorting human thought under oppressive pressure—a fact history has repeatedly confirmed.



A Bible-Inspired Critique

The Bible teaches that every individual possesses inherent value and dignity. In Genesis 1:27, it states:

“So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” This means that every person is created in God’s image and thus has an inalienable worth. Christians are therefore called to defend individual freedom and rights, ensuring that no majority group tramples on personal liberties. Through prayer and wise guidance, we can seek God’s will in decision-making processes, ensuring that justice and compassion prevail.

Furthermore, the Bible promotes a balance between individual and collective interests. In Romans 12:4–5, it is noted,

“For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.” This teaches that while every person has unique value and contributions, we must also nurture communal harmony and cooperation through love and humility.

The Scriptures advocate justice and compassion—but they do not endorse enforced equality. For instance, 1 Corinthians 3:8 declares,

“The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor.”

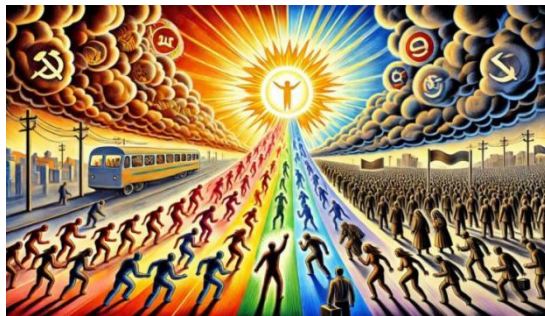
This suggests that it is fair for people to receive according to their efforts. Christians should extend voluntary, loving assistance to those in need rather than relying on coercive economic systems. We are to cultivate diligence, wisdom, and love, practicing justice and compassion even within market economies.

Hayek's critiques of collectivism and communism ultimately derive from a fundamental principle of critical thinking—a mindset that is essential to recognize and resist irrational social and economic systems. The Bible encourages wisdom and discernment. Proverbs 4:7 advises:

“The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding.” By diligently learning from daily experiences, we can develop a sound, rational approach to problem-solving, enabling us to distinguish truth from error.

In practical terms, this means extensively reading the Bible as well as classical works in philosophy and other disciplines. It also means cultivating independent thought—questioning authority and the popular opinion when necessary, even if one must sometimes “mask” one's dissent in official settings. When possible, engage in thoughtful discussions with like-minded friends to broaden your perspective. Most importantly, seek God's wisdom and guidance in prayer and meditation, reflecting on your own views, which not only fosters a proactive attitude toward thinking but also sets a positive example for those around you.

By combining Hayek's insights with biblical principles, we can gain a fuller appreciation of the importance of freedom, individual rights, and social justice. Cultivating critical thinking and respecting personal autonomy and creativity are key to building a healthy, harmonious society.



(As an aside: If any organization or ideology loses its grounding among people—if it stands aloof like transient clouds that momentarily obscure the sun—it will never truly hinder the steady advance of those seeking the light.)

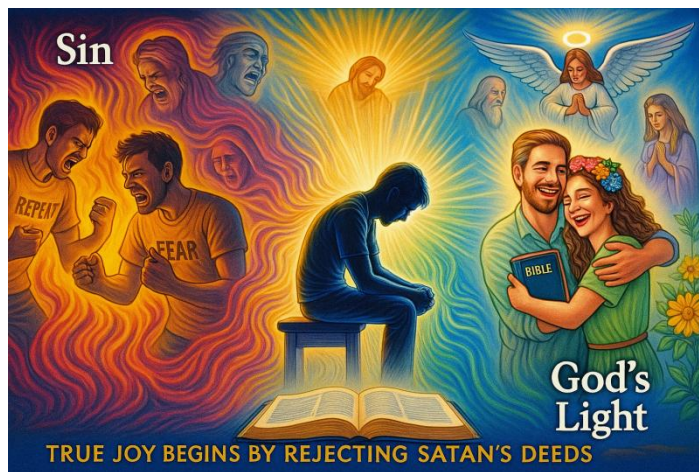
Will You Keep Consorting with Satan While Forcing a Smile?



In our busy modern society, many of us present different faces in different settings. For example, at work you may smile like a harmless little bunny and do everything your boss demands, yet once home you become like a troubled lion; with your family you might appear increasingly tolerant, but after work you still hide in your car, unwilling to come home; on social media your photos shine with brilliant smiles, yet your true mood is as gloomy as a long, drizzly day... Perhaps we have all experienced moments when our outward smile appears radiant while our inner heart is clouded. But living life with a forced smile not only leaves our minds in turmoil, it can also, over the long run, inflict deep wounds on both our body and soul. Many cases of midlife crisis stem from this internal disconnect. Moreover, more and more young people are beginning to adopt this façade. Friends, did you know? This state of being actually hints at our deep inner defiance against destiny, as well as our unwarranted pity and continued indulgence of our sinful nature.

Many people are unwilling to admit that they harbor sin within their hearts. Here, “sin” is not meant in the legal sense, but refers to that which violates God’s law. The Bible first mentions sin in Genesis 4:7 NKJV:

“If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.”” The Hebrew word for sin originally meant “an arrow that missed the target” and later came to imply “the created object failing to achieve the purpose set by its Creator.” Sin encompasses many things, as detailed throughout the Torah, but in everyday life it is often seen in the various ways Satan is described. Each of us must face our sinful nature head-on. Forcing a smile and maintaining a façade is a clear manifestation of internal deceit and falsehood. Beyond deceit and pretense, there are also temptations and trials, fear and anxiety, pride and self-centeredness, anger and resentment, and transgressive carnal desires. These collective sins are the very tools Satan employs to disturb us and keep us from experiencing true joy and peace.



We need to humble ourselves before God and ask the Holy Spirit to illuminate our hearts—so that we may see our shortcomings and misdeeds, repent sincerely, and receive God’s forgiveness and healing. At this point, many believers and even those who do not know Jesus might come away with mixed impressions. In truth, the names God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit here express the same meaning— they are One in the Trinity. Each person’s life requires the Lord to reign in every aspect. In this world, regardless of who you are, your thoughts and desires are ultimately rooted in mere survival or the pursuit of a better life;

they can never compare with the purposes of our Creator. If we continue to indulge our selfish desires and vain pursuits, we have no right to enjoy the spiritual comfort and joy that come from abiding in our Creator.

When we realize this—when we understand that our forced smiles hide the fact that our sin is at the root—we must turn to God in repentance. The Bible tells us,

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9) Through sincere repentance and prayer, we can obtain God’s forgiveness and begin anew. At the very least, our repentance must address those sins mentioned above—the deceit and temptation, the testing and doubt, the fear and anxiety, the pride and self-centeredness, the falsehood and deception, the anger and resentment, and the overstepping of carnal boundaries. In work, home, and every aspect of daily life, we constantly struggle with these inner battles and emotional swings. Left unchecked, these feelings can trap us, gnaw away over years—even decades—accumulating into burdens that eventually cause real harm to our physical and mental well-being.

God is our Helper, and His Word is the medicine for our soul. When we face inner turmoil, His Word gives us strength and direction. This is not to say that God is merely an abstract comforter; rather, by reading and meditating on Scripture, we renew our minds and break free from the sins that root in our hearts—sins born from the dark thoughts and negative emotions that Satan uses to inflict real damage on us. It is precisely these wounds that lead to our double life, robbing us of our God-given potential to bear witness to His glory. We force a smile because, deep down, we know that God still dwells within us. We have every reason to live joyfully and every right to display the happiness we were meant to have—but Satan is desperately contending with God for our joy. In anthropomorphic terms, if we do not shed our conceited, self-important ways, our temper, and our prideful reliance on our own “wisdom,” we will never experience true happiness.

So, dear brothers and sisters, do you finally understand why we force a smile? You were meant to be joyful. The moment you

decide to cast off Satan's influence is the true beginning of a joyful life. Read more of God's Word; understand His promises—and you will learn how to gain real wisdom and strength. For example, when you feel fear, meditate on the promise,

“I will never leave you nor forsake you.” (Hebrews 13:5) When you feel anger or resentment, remember, “But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” (Matthew 5:44) God's Word is the shield for our souls. It helps us resist Satan's disturbances, suppressing and even eradicating within us the very “evil” that does not belong.

Building a healthy spiritual life is an important path to ridding ourselves of inner sin. Regular prayer, Bible reading, and participation in worship are all vital ways to establish an intimate relationship with God. Through these spiritual disciplines, we can continually receive strength and wisdom from God, overcome the works of Satan in our hearts, and live a life of genuine joy and authenticity. You might say, “My burdens are too great, my struggles unique—how can I ever let go?” At such times, I urge every believer not to face their inner battles alone but to seek the support and help of fellow believers. In the church, we can find like-minded friends who share their experiences and pray for one another, collectively facing these internal challenges. As Scripture instructs,

“Confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed.” (James 5:16)

Life is hard enough already; we need not add another layer of hypocrisy. Instead of forcing a smile, why not be authentic with yourself and others? Accept your imperfections and acknowledge your weaknesses—this is not a sign of vulnerability, but the first step toward inner peace. Try to be your authentic self each day. Rely on the words and truth of our Lord Jesus to reassess and dismantle Satan's influence in your life. In doing so, you will not only feel more at ease but will also foster more genuine and close relationships with those around you.

Let us pray together for the grace to live openly, sincerely, and joyfully!

What Else Should We Do to Truly “Live in the Moment”?

“Living in the moment” has become a high-level buzzword these days. Many people, when feeling overwhelmed or disorganized at work and in life, are advised to focus solely on the present—letting go of the past and not worrying about the future. With practice over time, such a method can indeed help stabilize one’s emotions. However, this way of “living in the moment” often leads to a self-centered state that lacks deep reflection on life and neglects long-term planning.

True “living in the moment” is not merely about focusing on immediate affairs; it requires placing God at the center of one’s life and facing daily challenges with a critical, discerning mind. It means rising above mere concerns for immediate benefits or power struggles and pursuing inner peace and genuine joy. Let us discuss this further.

Pros and Cons of Practicing “Living in the Moment”

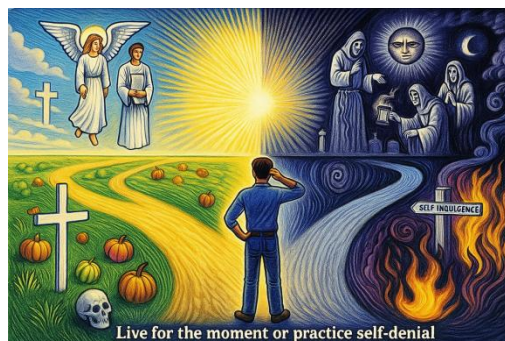
Common expressions and practices of “living in the moment” include the following approaches:

- **Living in the Moment:** Focus on and experience every current moment, letting go of worries about the future and attachments to the past. This approach can enhance immediate happiness, reduce stress and anxiety, and improve overall life satisfaction.
- **Mindfulness:** Consciously and non-judgmentally focus on the present, which helps enhance self-awareness and emotional management, fostering inner calm and emotional stability that benefit mental health and personal growth.
- **Here and Now:** Being fully present at the current time and place and avoiding distractions, which can heighten one’s sense of experience and engagement, thereby boosting efficiency at work and in daily life.
- **Seize the Day/Carpe Diem:** Make the most of each day by taking advantage of the opportunities available now. This mindset encourages adventure and the willingness to try new things, increasing the diversity and excitement in life.

- **Present-Moment Living:** Emphasize concentrating on the here and now while reducing preoccupations with the past or future. This approach can improve well-being and quality of life, helping people find satisfaction and happiness in the present.
- **Be Here Now:** Stress being fully present in a given time and space and not getting distracted by other times or places. This is intended to deepen one's inner peace and concentration and can be highly beneficial for personal spiritual growth and meditation.

Each of these methods has its benefits—but also certain drawbacks. They may sometimes lack long-term goal setting or future planning, require sustained practice and effort to be effective, or carry an undertone of hedonism.

Many people adopt these “live in the moment” techniques as ways to boost focus and alleviate immediate worries. In specific phases of life, this approach can be very helpful. However, its disadvantages gradually become apparent: without long-term goals and without a sense of reverence for the One who rules everything in the present, our lives can become a series of disconnected little stories. Once one chapter ends, we may feel uncertain about the next. Life can then seem like a succession of trivial events, and eventually, the variety of daily worries we once tried to ignore ends up trapping us. In effect, this is akin to living solely in one's own world—lacking an overarching perspective on life and a deep reflection on biblical truth. Particularly within our current cultural tradition, many have grown accustomed to pleasing those in authority, focusing only on immediate gains and power while neglecting reverence for the Most High and contemplation of life's ultimate meaning.



Is “Living in the Moment” Merely an Escape?

Dear brothers and sisters, have you ever considered that people strive so hard to “live in the moment” precisely because they are trying to escape the guilt of past sins and the anxiety and worry about the future? The idea of “not dwelling on the past” is, in fact, a selective forgetting imposed by the bondage of our former sinful nature—the very same sins described in our earlier discussion of Satan’s work. The misdeeds and emotions—deceit, temptation, doubt, pride, falsehood, anger, resentment, and transgressive carnal desires—that we have committed in pursuit of personal gain and self-indulgence continue to cloud our hearts when we attempt to practice “living in the moment.” Likewise, “not thinking about the future” reflects the anxiety and dissatisfaction born of knowing that one must face an uncertain future entirely on one’s own. The only certainty is that the future is uncertain and our power is limited.

Therefore, the prerequisite for genuinely “living in the moment” is not a continuous, self-driven exercise in forgetting one’s sin; it is rather a process of self-examination and repentance before the Lord—a removal of Satan’s disturbances. No one who remains bound by sin can enjoy true peace of heart in the present.

In short, repenting while trying to “live in the moment” is not a means of shirking reality or evading the discipline of the Lord. Think of Jonah: he only came to his senses after being thrown into the sea and swallowed by a fish. High-quality “living in the moment” requires that we set the Lord as the ultimate authority in our lives. The Bible instructs,

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.” (Proverbs 3:5–6)

Just as Jonah ultimately acknowledged, “Salvation comes from the LORD” (Jonah 2:9c, Chinese Union Version). When we make God our highest priority, unafraid of worldly power or personal gain, we gain hope that transcends our current difficulties. The goal of “living in the moment” is not to indulge in momentary comfort, but rather to experience that long-lasting joy that follows true repentance—a joy that lifts the heavy burden of sin.

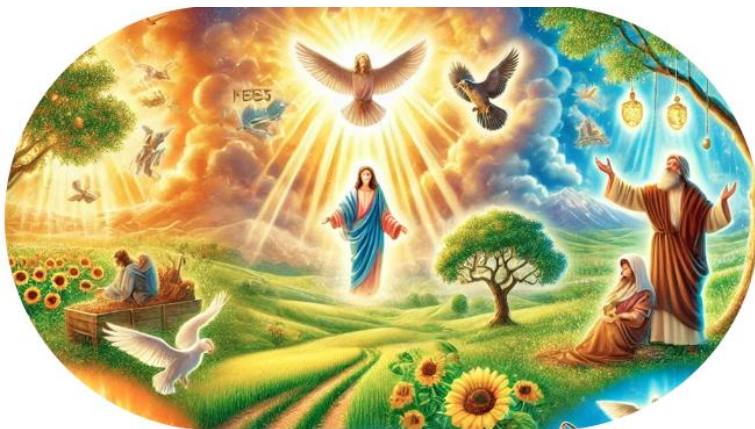
A society's progress depends on the efforts and exemplary behavior of every generation. Many act out of a lack of reverence for the Most High, impulsively doing things against their conscience or moral ethics on the whim of a leader. This not only affects individual happiness and social harmony but also brings negative consequences to our children. If parents choose a "lying flat" lifestyle, refusing to repent while still harboring unrealistic expectations like "hoping for their children to become prodigies" and then dictate how their children should live, how can that possibly work? In our Eastern cultural context, we must model through our own behavior and lifestyle what it truly means to live in the present. When we revere God and pursue inner peace and joy—without being shackled by immediate interests or power—we set a positive example for our children and create a better future.

For a full, profound, and meaningful life, a God-centered way of living is far superior. Concepts like "living in the moment" can be useful for enhancing our everyday experience—but only when combined with a reflective, repentant heart and a commitment to passing on God's love. May each of you, dear brothers and sisters, find true peace and joy in God's love and live a life that is genuine and meaningful.

Finally, I want to stress that the purpose of my blog is not to lecture others. Most of what I write here comes from my own personal experiences and the insights I have gained in my struggle to depend on Christ. There is nothing wrong with fighting for the dreams of your youth. But when you step into the real world, veer off course, and lose yourself, that is when sin begins. After many years of being caught in Satan's snare, I finally realized the truth in the words, "Salvation comes from the LORD." Though I came to this realization in middle age, it is never too late. May God grant each of us the opportunity to follow Him.

May the Lord be with all our brothers and sisters!

“Only in Storms Can We Truly Know Your Tenderness”



Loving our Lord Jesus and following Him through life's storms, relying on Him in everything—it is such an exhilarating feeling! Only when we finally see the Lord face-to-face do we understand that the storms we endure largely spring from our own narrow and short-sighted hearts. When the apostle John proclaimed, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near!” (Matthew 3:2, Chinese Union Version), and when Jesus later said, “From that time on Jesus began to preach, saying, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near!’” (Matthew 4:17, Chinese Union Version), He was not unaware of our fragile and prideful hearts. He knew that we, with hearts hardened against repentance, were unwilling to discard the lies that make us appear impressive to the world, or to abandon the resentments we cling to out of vanity.

Dear brothers and sisters, because of the love of Jesus Christ we have the hope of salvation in this life, and we are filled with gratitude. The passing of our brothers and sisters who have left this world not only fills us with sorrow but also makes us deeply reflect on the brevity of life and our mission in it. Their lives of faith serve as examples to all of us—showing us how to love the Lord, follow Him, and rely on Him in all things, bearing witness to His grace and mercy throughout their lives.

The Bible also teaches that our hearts are often ensnared by sins such as pride, selfishness, jealousy, and anger—sins that hinder us from drawing near to the Lord and experiencing His grace. Those who have met the Lord remind us that repentance is not

merely a verbal confession but a profound transformation of the heart. We must bravely face our weaknesses instead of hiding behind a mask of pretense. Though storms and challenges are inevitable in life, it is precisely through these trials that we learn humility and depend on the Lord's strength. Always remain alert so that Satan's temptations and lies do not deceive your heart. As 1 Peter 5:8 warns,

"Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour."

On the road to repentance, we are not alone. As disciples of the Lord, we belong to one family and need to support and encourage one another—offering each other strength against the snares of Satan, and courage when one feels overwhelmed. In the love of the Lord, let us walk side by side toward a life of holiness and inner tranquility. As Hebrews 10:24–25 advises,

"And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."

Dear brothers and sisters, with grateful hearts let us remember our departed loved ones whose lives of faith have set an example for us. Their witness reminds us how vital repentance and reliance on the Lord are. Let us follow our Lord Jesus with unwavering trust, relying on Him in everything and walking on the path of renewed hearts.

"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near!"

Repentance should not be seen as a forced act of resignation but as the red carpet toward the embrace of our Lord. Remember these words and become the people who delight the Lord.

Let us pray together!

(Song Lyrics: *"Walk With Me Through the Seasons"*, The pinyin of the Chinese song title is: Pei Wo Zou Guo Chun Xia Qiu Dong.)

When only in the winds and rains do I truly know Your tenderness; Years past and years to come, I still believe in Your gracious hand. Growing up year by year, longing anew each time— You comfort me, console me, have mercy on me. You

promised to walk with me through the spring, summer, autumn, and winter; To care for me, lead me, and protect me. Those who trust in the LORD fear nothing; He never abandons those who rely on Him, never leaves them, Walking with me through every morning, evening, and night— No matter how my days may be, Your grace is boundless. In all things, relying on You, I prevail.

This translation aims to preserve the original nuances and biblical references while communicating the ideas clearly and naturally in English.

Child, What Is It That You Still Lack?

At the invitation of a friend, today I want to address a topic related to fatherhood. Due to the limitations of my personal experience, I cannot delve deeply into theoretical foundations; instead, I will share my own experiences and reflections. I also wish to put this topic forward so that any brothers and sisters reading it might reflect on it with me.

The Responsibility of Being a Parent

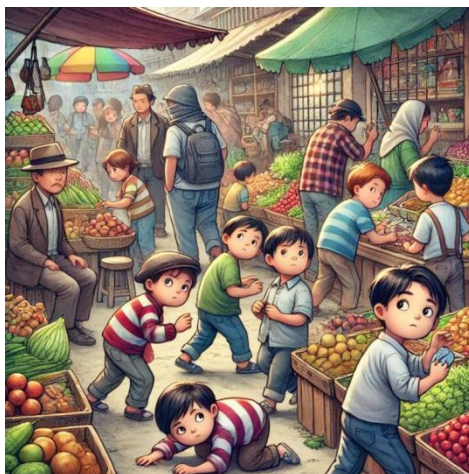
I too was once a child.

Twenty-seven years ago, my father died from an illness, and I became an orphan. Although my mother was still with me, I gradually sensed that something was missing in my work and life all those years. When I encountered difficult interpersonal relationships at work, I had to figure things out on my own; on major occasions in life—whether joyful or sorrowful—I had no one with whom to share. Though before his passing my father expressed three hopes for my life, I have come to feel that what I have done so far has not met his expectations.

Reflecting on my life from childhood through college, work, and even as a parent myself, I realize that while I may have achieved some “small successes,” I remain far from the goals stored in my heart. At best, I have merely managed to survive amid the currents of the times. The force that has held me back from taking bold steps comes from a defect in my own character—in my case, a lack of boundaries and a failure to grasp the depth and limits in what I do. I once told my friends that the root of my character deficiency came from the fact that I lacked a proper, firm correction from my father when I was young.

Let me explain: In about 1978, when I was in the third grade of elementary school, life was generally frugal. I, along with three or four other classmates, engaged in petty theft at the marketplace. When we were caught, the incident was reported to school, and the teacher contacted our parents. Both of my parents were teachers at that time, so I expected a severe punishment after school. However, my mother shielded me—and perhaps persuaded my father as well—so that the punishment that night was merely a brief scolding instead of a harsh beating. This

“lenient” treatment far exceeded my expectations of punishment for stealing—a punishment that, back then, often involved beatings for misbehaving children. That experience instilled in me a sense of luck and helped sow the seeds for a lifetime of lacking appropriate boundaries.



Now, my father certainly cannot provide that missed lesson anymore—and that remains a lifelong regret. I often think that perhaps when my parents were together, they did not fully understand how to educate a child. I now realize what common sense demands. Compared to many of my peers, I believe I was relatively fortunate in my upbringing. Yet that one instance of lax discipline was a major error in their approach. My father should have resisted my mother’s pleas and given me a firm beating to teach me a lasting lesson about what should and should not be done—ensuring that my future path would be more righteous.

I recall a verse from the Bible:

“Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.” (Proverbs 22:6, Chinese Union Version)
Perhaps my parents did not fully grasp this saying at the time, or they might have softened their stance in that era when poverty was widespread—when even theft could be seen as a kind of “ability.” Today, regardless of whether our parents are with us or not, our relationship with them remains unchanged. I have come to realize that they gave us life. No matter how they educated us, there is always some regret. In that era, merely raising my brother and me to adulthood was probably the limit of what they

could manage. Today, even if we spend every waking moment missing them, how could we even find it in our hearts to complain about them?

For it is written,

“Children are a heritage from the LORD, offspring a reward from him.” (Psalm 127:3, Chinese Union Version) Our very existence is a gift from the LORD to our parents. The responsibility of our upbringing comes as an inheritance from God. (The KJV reads: “Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward.”) Know that every generation’s “inheritance” must be treated with the same joy and seriousness as receiving an award from the One who bestows it.

From childhood through college, work, marriage, and having my own children, every stage of life has demonstrated that each person is a unique individual and a reward in God’s sight. I was given by God—and realizing that fact has elevated me in quality compared to my parents’ generation. Therefore, every person should strive to live fully under the guidance of the Lord, the Ruler of heaven and earth. We must not simply become an instrument for Satan’s attacks or narrowly serve as a tool of some particular ideology. Must we wait until we receive a hard lesson—such as a severe beating—to learn this truth?

Viewing Parental Responsibility from God’s Perspective

In God’s eyes, every child is unique and precious. Yet in real life, we often feel something is missing—be it the absence of parental affection, material insufficiency, or emotional loneliness—all of which can leave us confused and in pain. The absence or breakdown of a father’s or mother’s role often leaves an indelible mark on our hearts. But as children of God, we need to ask ourselves: What is it that we truly lack? Do these deficiencies surpass our reliance on Him? Have we come to fully understand the completeness and satisfaction that comes from being in Christ?

I want to focus today especially on the lack or absence of a father. For many children, the absence of a father is a great regret. Whether due to physical absence or emotional distance, the role of a father in a child’s growth is irreplaceable; his love and support grant children security and confidence.

First, it must be recognized that a father's absence is not the child's fault, but rather often the result of marital strife and human sin. Those with a foundation of faith understand that parents are sinners too. More often than not, they lack a shared foundation in faith, and their views on marriage are skewed; they are forced to fight for a living and personal interests, and inevitably, they succumb to various attacks from Satan and stray from God's way. Secondly, a father is also a man who is never fully grown—he needs meticulous care and discipline from his wife. A wife's influence on her husband, the father, is critical in shaping his marital development.



In many instances, the fault for a family's breakdown is not solely the father's; it is often partially due (say 25% to a lack of understanding from the wife and 25% to her lack of care, along with another 30% related to how she disciplines her husband). A husband (or father) is, in many ways, like his wife's first "child"—he must start learning at her "school" from the beginning until he matures enough to stabilize the family. The care, understanding, and companionship that a husband receives from his wife are equally important. I need not elaborate further here, but know that the separation of parents is usually the culmination of escalating conflicts. Without a unified foundation in faith, neither party can honestly examine their own sinfulness out of love; all that remains is obstinacy and a painful split. Understanding this should allow children to let go of self-blame, accept the reality as it has unfolded, and work earnestly to steward God's inheritance.

Beyond the absence of a father, other familial deficiencies—such as the death of loved ones or family fragmentation—also bring pain. The sense of loss, whether emotional or material, breeds loneliness and despair. Material insufficiency itself is a significant issue, leading to financial pressures and anxiety. The lack of economic support and life resources not only affects one's quality of life but also makes people vulnerable to Satan's temptations, like the incident of my own childhood.

The Worldly Standard and the Root of Sin

As disciples of Christ, we must ask ourselves: Do these deficiencies truly surpass our reliance on Jesus? Too often, disciples are weighed down by the world's standards, measuring what they should possess and seeking the approval of others. In doing so, we overlook that we are the recipients of God's grace and the heirs of His inheritance. Recognizing this alone can lift our perspective beyond most secular expectations and help us evade the snares of sin.

In our youthful years, it is challenging to live a life based solely on faith. I reached a turning point at the age of 35, when a significant setback in life led me to depend on Jesus. For more than 20 years afterward, I vacillated between relying on my own wisdom and on God's guidance. It wasn't until I lost the two most important people in my life that I realized I had no one else to rely on—every decision, every consequence fell squarely on my shoulders. Then, I suddenly understood that there had been Someone silently protecting me all along. In my despair, when my body and soul were sinking, He comforted and encouraged me, strengthening me to live joyfully and to drive the blessings He had given me toward prosperity.

That source of strength is God's guidance. Even after all the trials, He has never forsaken me. "I had heard of You, but now I have seen You with my own eyes."

(Job 42:5, Chinese Union Version) Between "hearing" and "seeing" lies a barrier—the barrier of one's own pride and resentment. I had always assumed I could solve my problems through my own ability and was unwilling to stop and listen to His counsel.

In my previous article **“Only in Storms Can We Truly Know Your Tenderness,”** I noted that repentance carries a similar meaning. Whenever we choose to become the children of the Lord, when we set aside our pride and complaints and come before Him in repentance, our Lord Jesus will grant us the true satisfaction and comfort of life. No matter what we lack, if we depend on Jesus, our hearts will be filled with gratitude as we recognize the blessings He showers on us. We will find greater satisfaction and joy in helping others, and in His Word our hearts and souls will find peace and solace. As it is written in Psalm 23:1:

“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.” As long as we trust in the Lord, He will supply everything we need.

In this light, could it be that all our feelings of lacking—whether for parental love, material wealth, or other forms—are nothing more than Satan’s lies?

Conclusion

My dear disciples and children, what is it that you truly lack? No deficiency—be it in family, material wealth, or anything else—can surpass our reliance on and worship of Jesus. Only in Him will we find true satisfaction and peace, becoming the people He delights in. Chasing worldly standards and the approval of others will only distance us from genuine satisfaction and happiness. Let us return to the foundation of our faith, relying on Jesus, and find in His love all that we need.

Please, dear brothers and sisters, join me in prayer for this!

Xi Jiang Yue: Old & New Testament Book Names

Below is an attempt to express the names and main content of the books of the Old Testament in a concise and rhythmically elegant “Xi Jiang Yue” style. Arranged in the order of the Old Testament, each book’s name and its main theme are linked together. Every couplet corresponds to the themes of several books, striving to convey the rich content and historical context of the Old Testament within the framework of this fixed poetic form, feel the charm of ChatGPT too. May our brothers and sisters, through this ci(Chinese poetry), experience God’s work and revelation in the Old Testament:



Xi Jiang Yue · Old Testament Books

西江月 · 旧约各卷

创世神工初立，出埃民走荒茫，利未献祭清香，民数旷野徜徉。
申命律法再明，约书攻占应赏，士师混乱时光，路得蒙恩信长。
撒母先知统领，列王南北兴衰，历代帝王豪迈，归乡以斯拉来。
尼希复墙完美，以斯保族命改，约伯苦难试验，诗篇赞美神怀。
箴言智慧如珠，传道虚空感慨，雅歌爱意深埋，先知预言主来。
以赛平安预告，耶利哀哭灾害，哀歌悲悯国衰，以西异象常在。
但以忠心守道，十二小先多才，何西怜悯爱怀，约珥末日来快。
阿摩斯警惕先，俄巴敌国遭害，约拿尼尼悔改，弥迦公义成败。
那鸿亚述必败，哈巴愤怒胸怀，西番悔改恩赐，哈该重建殿台。
撒迦末日显现，玛拉预言主来，旧约写尽沧桑，救恩将至天开。

“Creation: God’s handiwork begins; Exodus: the people wander a desolate land; Leviticus: fragrant sacrifices offered; Numbers: the wilderness journey unbound. Deuteronomy: law reaffirmed anew; Joshua: conquest duly rewarded; Judges: chaotic ages of strife; Ruth: redeemed by grace abounded.

Samuel and the prophets lead; Kings: north and south rise and fall; Chronicles record the mighty reign of emperors; Ezra returns the exiled; Nehemiah rebuilds perfect walls; Esther’s courage saves a people; Job’s trials test the soul; Psalms in praise reveal God’s heart.

Proverbs shines with wisdom’s jewel; Ecclesiastes laments life’s vain despair; Song of Songs conceals love’s deep secret; prophets foretell the coming Lord; Isaiah proclaims peace’s promise; Lamentations weep for ruined days; The Book of Lament and other oracles in exile persist.”

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Below is the “Xi Jiang Yue” version using clear and brisk language for the New Testament books. Arranged in the order of the New Testament, this composition links each book’s name and its main content, presenting the core message of the epistles and Revelation. Each couplet corresponds to the themes of several books, aiming to encapsulate the essence of the New Testament while preserving the ci form. May our brothers and sisters sense the power of the gospel message and the strength of faith in the New Testament:

Xi Jiang Yue · New Testament Books

西江月 · 新约各卷

马太基督降世，马可神迹显荣，路加医者妙手，约翰真理光明。
行传福音广传，罗马书信昭明，哥林多书传爱，宣扬信望与情。
加拉太保罗劝，弗所书教恩情，腓立比喜同主，歌罗西主安宁。
帖撒罗尼慈牧，提摩提训教成，提多忠心服侍，腓利门爱主诚。
希伯来信持久，雅各行为言真，彼得书传稳固，约翰书教纯清。
犹大抗拒异端，启示末日警声，新约恩典奇妙，神爱永世同行。

“Matthew: Christ is born; Mark: divine signs shine with glory; Luke: the healer’s wondrous touch; John: truth beams in light. Acts: the gospel widely proclaimed; Romans: a letter of divine

truth; Corinthians: love is the message; proclaiming hope, faith, and affection.

Galatians: Paul’s exhortation rings; Ephesians: grace and love taught; Philippians: joy shared in the Lord; Colossians: the Lord brings peace. Thessalonians: shepherds with tender care; Timothy’s letters instruct and build; Titus: serving with loyal heart; Philemon: love for the Lord expressed.

The Hebrews speak of enduring faith; James insists that deeds reveal truth; Peter’s letters secure a steadfast foundation; John’s writings convey pure instruction. Jude rejects heresy; Revelation warns of the end-time— New Testament grace is wondrous, and God’s love walks with us forever.”

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Below are two additional poetic formats:

1. Shui Diao Ge Tou Version for the Old Testament Books

Shui Diao Ge Tou · Old Testament Books

水调歌头 · 旧约各卷
创世洪荒记，出埃寄异邦。利未献祭之法，民数四野茫。
申命神恩昭示，约书行军攻城，士师乱世狂。路得蒙恩典，撒母显权章。
列王国，兴与衰，似梦长。历代忠义传颂，以斯拉归乡。
尼希基城复兴，以斯守节记明，忧思如深江。约伯身遭难，诗歌敬天光。
传道智，雅歌美，显真常。赛耶哀伤犹亡，耶利预警长。
以西声如洪流，但以忠心执守，何西示忧肠。约珥阿摩斯，俄巴因怨降。
约拿逃，弥迦斥，宣善良。那鸿悲泣尼尼，哈巴古泪行。
西番悔改蒙福，哈该殿中劝归，撒迦见异象。玛拉基末篇，旧约圣书藏。

“Record of creation, primordial and vast; Exodus sends souls to alien lands. Leviticus’ sacrificial rites prescribed, Numbers: the people wander wide and far. Deuteronomy reveals divine grace anew; Joshua leads the military campaign; Judges in a disordered era rage, Ruth receives blessing’s gentle call; Samuel and the prophets herald authority, Kings rise and fall as in a fleeting dream; Chronicles praise steadfast loyalty; Ezra’s return brings homeward hope; Nehemiah’s walls rise in perfect might; Esther stands brave, a tale of power; Job endures suffering, his psalms a skyward light. Ecclesiastes’ wisdom, Song of Songs’ concealed delight, Isaiah’s prophetic voice still sounds; Jeremiah laments a nation’s plight; Lamentations echo sorrow; Ezekiel,

with visions like a surging flood; Daniel in the lion's den stands brave; Hosea's love, Joel's urgent calls, Amos warns, Obadiah brings doom; Jonah flees, Micah rebukes with righteousness; Nahum weeps, Habakkuk's anger overflows; Zephaniah calls for repentance, Haggai rebuilds the temple, Zechariah foretells visions of the end; Malachi concludes the sacred scroll."

Does the title "Shui Diao Ge Tou" evoke thoughts of the Great Flood and the Jordan River?

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2. Man Jiang Hong Version for the New Testament Books

Below is an attempt to render the Chinese names of the New Testament books in the form of "Man Jiang Hong." In each verse the core theme of each book is incorporated, expressing not only the richness of New Testament content but also retaining the rhythm and cadence of the "Man Jiang Hong" style. This form not only aids in memorizing the order of the New Testament books but also presents the sacred significance of each book in a poetic, lyrical format.

Man Jiang Hong · New Testament Books

满江红 · 新约经卷

马太记，弥赛亚降生，传福音，显神迹，十字架上赎人罪。

马可行事快，救主言行记。路加多细节，医者心慈爱。

约翰深奥义，道成肉身传，世人皆获救。

使徒行，圣灵降临传福音，教会兴起，保罗宣教旅途长。

罗马书，义因信得，律法与恩典。哥林多，书信两封，劝教会归正。

加拉太，律法与福音之争；以弗所，讲教会合一。

腓立比，喜乐在主内；歌罗西，基督为至高。

帖撒罗尼迦，两封信，末日预言显。提摩太，忠告勉励，传道使命传。

提多与腓利门，牧者与奴仆，言忠义。

希伯来，讲基督至高，救赎大功成。雅各书，信心与行为同行。

彼得书，教会受难，信仰坚定。约翰书三封，爱与真理并行。

犹大书，警戒信徒防异端。

启示录，末日审判，天国降临，新天新地，荣耀归神民。

Matthew—of the Messiah's birth, Gospel proclaimed, wonders displayed, On the cross our sins redeemed. Mark—his swift deeds recorded, The Savior's words and acts conveyed.

Luke—with details ample, The healer’s tender, loving care;
John—with profound mystery, The Word made flesh to save all
men.

In Acts the apostles journey forth, The Spirit descends to spread
the news; The church is born, while Paul’s long mission Carves
out roads of gospel truth. Romans—righteousness by faith
revealed, The law and grace in bold conflict; Corinthians—two
epistles guide, Admonishing the church to reset.
Galatians—debating law with gospel’s claim;
Ephesians—speaking of the church’s unity. Philippians—joy
within the Lord resounds; Colossians—Christ exalted above all
be. The Thessalonians—two letters warn Of the end times soon to
shine; Timothy—exhortations firm and true, The charge to
preach remains defined. Titus and Philemon—of shepherds and
their slaves, Words of loyalty and truth enshrined.

The Hebrews proclaim Christ’s supremacy, Redemption’s
glorious work complete; James declares that faith and works
must blend; Peter’s letters show the church in trial, faith
steadfast. John’s three epistles march in love and truth; Jude
warns believers against heresy’s strain.

Revelation—of final judgment and the day’s decree, The kingdom
of heaven descends; A new heaven and earth arise, Glory to God
for all His people now.

*Does the title “Man Jiang Hong” not evoke the passionate zeal of
Paul, Peter, John, and the other disciples as they boldly preached
for the Lord?*

After the translation of Chinese poetry into English, some of the
poetic style and rhyme aspects were lost, so I kept screenshots of
Chinese poems. This translation endeavors to capture the spirit
and style of the original poetic composition while conveying the
core themes of each New Testament book as presented in the “满
江红” format.

The Power of Rebirth: From an Eagle's Transformation to the Renewal of the Soul

It is said that the World Health Organization—based on modern life conditions—has proposed a new categorization of life stages by age. I find this quite reasonable, as I believe that part of their criteria includes an element of faith. (See accompanying illustration.)

For many people born between the 1950s and 1970s, having traveled halfway through life and accumulated rich experiences, wisdom, and insights, there may be a lingering question: Are you already an old person? Today, let us explore this topic and also consider a more important issue: Are we still bound by our past habits, character, and lifestyles? At this critical stage, is it necessary to undergo a thorough renewal of ourselves?

The Eagle's Transformation and the Renewal of the Old Self

According to legend, in midlife an eagle undergoes a painful transformation (roughly analogous to an eagle's middle age). When its feathers grow old, and its beak and talons lose their sharpness, the eagle withdraws to a secluded place. There, amid great suffering, it uses its beak and talons to pull out the old feathers until new ones grow in—a process that lasts for nearly half a year. Although extremely arduous and fraught with danger, this process enables the eagle to be reborn and regain a youthful vitality—a transformation worth the struggle.

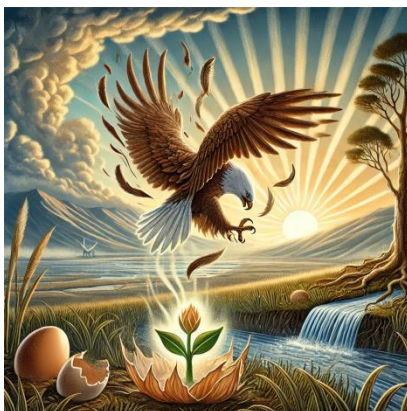
Even if this is only a legend—and indeed only a few eagles may achieve it—the significance is profound. It resonates deeply with an important Christian doctrine: “The old self must perish so that new life may emerge.” In order to obtain true rebirth, one must let go of the old self and allow the soul to be renewed. As the Bible says,

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!” (2 Corinthians 5:17)

What Is “the Old Self”?

During the first half of our lives—as “young people”—our interactions with parents, friends, and colleagues shape relatively fixed ways of thinking, behavioral habits, and character

traits. In some sense, this can be called “maturity.” Yet, upon entering middle age, such maturity can, without our noticing, become what younger generations call being stuck in the ways of the “old head.” For a disciple of Christ, this becomes the “old self” in God’s sight. Without proper faith, your accumulated experience might simply render you a “veteran” in the eyes of the world—a status that, as time passes, will eventually be cast aside.



I believe that recognizing the existence of the “old self” marks the beginning of personal transformation and the onset of true wisdom. Even a longtime believer may fall into the trap of relying heavily on personal experience or fixed ways of thinking. In today’s society—where material desires are vastly cultivated—very few Christians will, through prayer and God’s leading, face the realities of life as He directs. A life that has drifted away from God’s guidance inevitably becomes a slave to Satan (see our discussion, “What Exactly Is Satan?”), with worries and anxieties that continually disturb the heart. In other words, the “old self” encompasses not only our habitual ways of thinking about people and events but also our attitudes toward what has already happened and our deep-seated reactions to life’s circumstances. When every decision is centered on “me, me, me...,” and our mind is cluttered with past experiences, that “me” becomes the “old self”—a self detached from God’s guidance.

Allow me to describe three dimensions of the “old self”:

1. Our Fixed Ways of Thinking:

Past experiences shape our thinking. Many of us, having lived in certain environments for long periods, form fixed mental frameworks. We might habitually view issues from one

perspective or always maintain a set attitude toward challenges. Yet as times change, we need to reexamine these patterns and ask whether they hinder our adaptation to a new era.

2. Our Attitude Toward Past Events:

Past setbacks, failures, and even successes can, to a large extent, affect our attitude toward life. We might cling to past grievances or find it difficult to let go of regrets and resentments—perhaps influenced by our parents or other loved ones. Such attitudes become burdens on our hearts and hinder us from moving forward. We need to learn to view the past from different angles, releasing any unhealthy attachments to how others (even our own family) once behaved, so that we can regain inner freedom.

3. Our Expectations for the Future:

Facing the future, we must not only reexamine the past but also adopt a childlike mindset—a seed ready to be planted in the soil of a new era. Jesus taught, “Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” (Mark 10:15) This attitude calls for openness and humility in embracing new things, setting aside preconceptions about ourselves and others, and relearning how to confront life’s challenges under God’s guidance.

Crossing Over the Pain to Embrace New Life

Just as an eagle renews its body by shedding its old feathers, the first step toward relinquishing the “old self” is the renewal of our mind and spirit. The purpose of this article is not to compel change in others; each person has their own pace of life. Change is difficult—not everyone in middle age can realize or decide to transform their lives. In my own experience, I have come to understand the saying: “All the truth in the world does not necessarily equip a person; the only change comes from that wall you must face.” That wall is set up by the Lord for those who truly love Him—a reminder, in times of hardship, not to rely on our old ways but to trust in Him. It means confronting the deep fears, pains, and ingrained beliefs within us. You know all too well that if you fail to acknowledge your inadequacies and mistakes, you will remain in a kind of living hell; gradually, you’ll realize that no friend or family member can make these decisions for you. The only path from this mental prison to heaven is to

rely on the power of faith and steadfastly continue along that road.

Here is what I have found to be effective:

- **First:** Humble yourself before God and examine what you carry as “pride and self-satisfaction.” Recognize that you need His guidance and help. Through prayer, reading Scripture, and being part of a community of believers, we receive spiritual support and direction. In this process, God helps us see where our lives need to change and gives us the strength to carry out those changes.
- **Second:** Learn to let go of past burdens—grant forgiveness to others and yourself. Releasing judgment is the beginning of forgiving both ourselves and others, and the true start of letting go of bitterness to welcome new life. Jesus taught, “Do not judge, so that you will not be judged.” (Matthew 7:1) Judgment too stems from our pride. Middle-aged individuals should willingly embrace a new lifestyle and fresh mindset, boldly try new things, and accept different viewpoints, allowing positive change to flow into their lives.
- **Third:** And most importantly, repent! Truth be told, at this stage—when you are considered an “elder brother,” “elder sister,” or senior leader at work and in the family—no one is likely to challenge your opinions out of respect for your rank. Thus, self-examination becomes the only chance to renew oneself.

Recall the Israelites who, led by Moses, endured more than forty years in the wilderness on their way to the Promised Land. That time required not only steady, concrete steps through the desert but also wholehearted following of the LORD. Those who remained “**in the wilderness, with hearts still in Egypt**” ended up perishing there—unworthy of crossing the Jordan.

So, for those of us born in the 1950s to 1970s: Have you ever considered what it will mean if you refuse to acknowledge this? If you refuse to repent before God, what will be the result? Even if you appear better off—wearing finer clothes, driving a limousine, and even spending time on trending apps—you may still be repeating your parents’ mistakes, living in a mental wilderness, trapped in a never-ending cycle.

Once more, **the only way out is to repent before God.** To shed the “old self” is as painful as an eagle ripping out its old feathers—and though it is excruciating, you will receive the reward from the LORD. Without such a change, you will never have the chance to serve as an example to your struggling children, to show them the way out toward the Promised Land that God has prepared for His offspring.

For middle-aged rebirth is not merely a physical renewal—it is the surrender of the mind and spirit. With reverence for and reliance on the LORD, you lay the foundation for a “young at heart” later life. Otherwise, both physically and mentally, you risk becoming an old person discarded by time. And one day, your children may follow in your footsteps—repeating the cycle and, ultimately, being eliminated in this vicious cycle.

The Renewal of the Soul and the Renewal of the Family

When middle-aged parents experience such a spiritual rebirth, not only will their own lives be transformed, but their families will also benefit. Children will see in their parents a renewed image—one filled with love, tolerance, and wisdom. The marital relationship, in turn, will grow more intimate and harmonious through mutual renewal.

Middle age is a critical turning point in life—a prime opportunity to reexamine and renew oneself. Just as a brave eagle, despite the pain of shedding its old feathers, emerges reborn, so too can each generation of middle-aged people cast off the “old self” and allow their souls to be infused with new vitality. Today’s young people will inevitably become tomorrow’s middle-aged. May every generation—young and middle-aged alike—welcome this sacred rebirth, become the new creation that pleases God, and may the grace and peace of the Lord be with every generation.

Please, dear brothers and sisters, join me in prayer for this transformation!

The Torch of Faith: Drawing Strength from the Global History of Bible Translation

Introduction: The Challenge of Faith and the Mission of the Preacher

The Bible is one of the most translated books in the world—rendered into over 3,400 languages. Yet behind this radiant achievement lie the hardships and unwavering faith of countless evangelists. In China and around the globe, preachers have faced tremendous challenges. They have overcome language barriers, cultural differences, social upheaval, and political oppression to bring God’s Word to people hungry for truth. However, many Christians today, when facing life’s challenges, find their faith wavering and their hearts no longer resolutely repentant. By reviewing the brief history of the Bible’s translation and dissemination both in China and worldwide, we can draw strength and rekindle the flame of our faith.

Part One: The Arduous Journey of Bible Translation Around the World

Across the globe, the history of Bible translation is filled with deeply moving stories that testify both to the power of faith and to the tireless efforts of the preachers.

1. The Courage of Wycliffe and Tyndale

In the 14th century, John Wycliffe of England initiated the movement to translate the Bible into English. Although his work eventually met fierce opposition from the Church, he is hailed as the “Morning Star of the Reformation” and paved the way for future efforts. In the 16th century, William Tyndale completed the first modern English translation of the Bible. To enable ordinary people to read Scripture, he evaded both Church and state persecution, ultimately being captured and martyred in Belgium. Tyndale’s efforts brought the Bible into countless homes and became an essential foundation for the English Reformation.

2. Rutherford’s African Mission

In the 19th century, Scottish missionary Robert Moffat ventured deep into the African interior to translate the Bible into Setswana. He spent many years living with local tribes to learn the language and culture. His work enabled the Bible to take root in Africa and

influenced the faith of countless people. In harsh environments, these preachers bore illness and loneliness, writing powerful testimonies with their very lives.

3. The Translation of the Bible into Hindi

In India, William Carey is revered as the “father of modern missions.” Not only did he translate the Bible into Hindi, but he also rendered it into Bengali, Sanskrit, and several other Indian languages. In a society marked by religious and cultural diversity, Carey’s work enabled millions in India to read God’s Word. His labors not only reshaped the religious landscape of India but also influenced the spread of Christianity throughout Asia.

These preachers, in various regions and cultural settings, sacrificed greatly to translate the Bible into the local languages. They not only overcame linguistic and cultural barriers but also faced multiple pressures from religious, political, and social forces. It is through their perseverance that the Bible has become one of the most widely disseminated books in the world.

Part Two: The Translation and Dissemination of the Bible in China—A Century of Struggle

The translation of the Bible into Chinese dates back to the late Ming Dynasty, but its widespread dissemination began in the 19th century. At the beginning of the 19th century, Western missionaries started entering China and brought the Bible and the gospel with them. However, the challenges of language, cultural differences, and social turmoil made Bible translation a formidable task.

In 1807, British missionary Robert Morrison arrived in China and embarked on his long and arduous journey of translating the Bible. After more than a decade of effort, he finally completed the first complete Chinese translation of the Bible in 1819. This translation laid the foundation for the spread of Christianity in China. Yet, Morrison and his colleagues faced not only linguistic challenges but also pressure from the Qing government and societal rejection. They worked in secrecy, risking their lives to spread the gospel.

In the early 20th century, Chinese society underwent enormous upheavals—from the Xinhai Revolution to the Anti-Japanese War and the establishment of the New China—during which

Christianity in China experienced repeated twists and turns. Bible translation and dissemination were once severely suppressed, yet the preachers did not give up. Even after 1949, despite increasingly harsh conditions, Bible translation work persisted with many missionaries and local believers sacrificing greatly.

After the Reform and Opening Up, with a relaxation of religious policies, the Bible once again emerged into public view. However, amid the rapid changes of modern society, preachers now face new challenges: How can they maintain the purity and power of their faith in an increasingly secular and pluralistic society?

Part Three: The Spiritual Challenges and Reflections of Modern Chinese Christians The challenges that Chinese Christians face today are different from the hardships of the early evangelists. Nowadays, the Bible has been translated into Mandarin, Cantonese, Hakka, and various minority languages. Christians can easily access Scripture and participate in religious activities. Yet the abundance of material comforts, societal diversity, and the freedom of belief has led many Christians to gradually lose their zeal for faith and the urgent need for repentance.

In the bustle of work and daily life, many Christians neglect the importance of spiritual growth. Their faith becomes formal and superficial, lacking inner strength. When confronted with difficulties, many choose to evade or compromise rather than stand firm in faith and rely on God's power to overcome challenges. This cooling and compromising of one's faith is precisely what modern Christians must reflect upon and repent.

Part Four: Drawing Strength from the History of Bible Translation

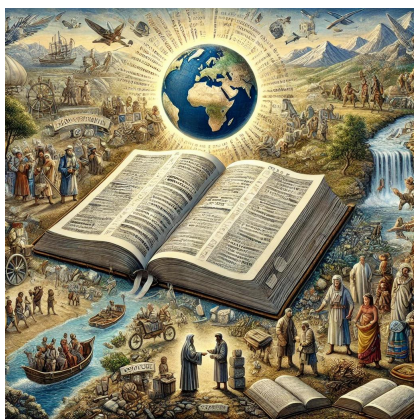
The history of the Bible's translation and dissemination in both China and around the world is a chronicle filled with challenges and triumphs. Every translation and every act of transmission is a chapter written in blood, sweat, and faith by preachers who believed that God's Word possesses the power to overcome every barrier and bring renewal to life. It is this unwavering faith that has allowed the Bible to take root and bear fruit across the globe, influencing countless lives.

Today, although we live in relatively peaceful and prosperous times, we must not relax our pursuit of faith. On the contrary, we should draw strength from the stories of these evangelists, reflect on our own shortcomings in our spiritual lives, and rekindle our love for God and our yearning for truth.

Conclusion: Rekindling the Flame of Faith

The Bible, having been translated into thousands of languages, stands as a testament to the global spread of faith. Every Christian should remember this history and draw strength from it, reflecting on their own spiritual journey. Regardless of how external circumstances may change, we must remain steadfast in our trust and reliance on God as we face life's challenges. Scripture—the very Word of God—provides instruction, correction, and guidance for righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16), reminding us that every problem we encounter—whether our dependence on the past, worries about the future, or hardships in life—is within God's sovereign working. We need to transform God's Word into a medium through which we entrust our lives to Him and integrate it into our daily actions.

Throughout our lives, we will encounter many challenges. Our own flesh and blood will eventually fail us. Only by handing over the “command center” of our minds to God and walking the path He has prepared for us can we proceed smoothly.



This painting symbolically depicts the history of the Bible's translation around the world and the stories of the preachers. It reflects their spirit of dedication in diverse cultures and adverse environments. The image shows the Bible being translated into many languages and preachers traversing varied terrains while facing multiple challenges—an

artistic reflection of the enduring power of faith and its long-lasting impact.

Let us pray together for this!

What Role Does Repentance Play in a Life of Faith?

Dear brothers and sisters,

Today I would like to share my thoughts on repentance in the life of faith. Through my experiences over these past few years, I have witnessed how Bible reading, prayer, worship, and other spiritual disciplines all increasingly point to one central issue: repentance (repent, in Hebrew, originally meaning “to turn back [to God]”).

In James 2:18 it is written,

“Someone will say, ‘You have faith; I have deeds.’ Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds.”

This verse goes straight to the heart of the matter—the relationship between faith and works. As Christians, we often say that we trust in God, but do our lives and actions, through genuine repentance, truly manifest the strength and reality of that faith? When our deeds fail to align with our professed faith, what does that say about the inner work of repentance that should be overcoming Satan’s influence in our hearts?

Part One: The Inseparability of Faith and Works

The book of James clearly teaches that faith without works is dead (James 2:26b). True faith is not merely an internal belief or a verbal confession—it must also be demonstrated through our actions. As Paul exhorts in 1 Corinthians 11:1, “Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.” Our faith should not reside solely in our inner convictions, but must guide our everyday life, serving as a compass for our actions. Only then does faith become living and genuine, powerfully testifying to God before others.

Yet many Christians, in their daily lives, may inadvertently overlook the consistency between faith and works. We might claim to trust in God, yet neglect to act with repentance. We may appear gentle and obedient, seemingly fulfilling the commandment “Love your neighbor as yourself,” but has our heart truly been transformed by repentance?



Part Two: The Greatest Commandments and the Prerequisite of Repentance

The Bible teaches that the greatest commandments are to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and the second is like it: “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:30–31). But what is the prerequisite for these commandments? Based on my own life experience, I believe it is repentance. Without true repentance, all external actions risk becoming hollow and meaningless.

Sometimes we may mistakenly think that merely displaying a refined and gentle demeanor means we are the disciples of the Lord. However, even the devil may appear dignified before committing evil. Jesus warned us, “Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish!” (see Luke 13:3b, Chinese Union Version). Repentance is the essential inner conversion that every Christian must experience. Without genuine repentance, our actions may simply serve as an external mask that hides inner turmoil. In such cases, our observance of the commandments can become nothing more than a formal performance, losing the sincere core of true faith.

Repentance means acknowledging our shortcomings and humbling ourselves before God, accepting His guidance and transformation. Only a faith that has experienced repentance can

take deep root in our hearts, and only then will our actions naturally reflect the love and truth of Christ.

Part Three: The Consequences of Unrepentance: Distrust Among Loved Ones

In many families, one spouse may have been a believer for many years while the other remains unresponsive or even rejects the faith. Such a situation can be deeply disheartening for the believing partner. But we must also reflect: could this condition be partly due to our own failure to fully live out an authentic faith? Often, we hear advice such as, “Keep praying—the Lord’s time has not yet come.” However, the power of prayer stems from heartfelt repentance and total surrender, does it not?

When we examine ourselves, are we exhibiting the qualities that characterize true disciples of Christ? This is not merely about “patience, gentleness, love, and humility” but involves a deeper reflection: Have we truly found our identity in Christ? Have we let go of past burdens and entrusted everything to God? Are we, in the face of life’s challenges, truly manifesting the joy and peace that Christ imparts?

One outcome of incomplete repentance is that we may fail to become a “living Bible” in the eyes of our spouses. If they do not see in us the transformation wrought by faith, they might be less drawn to it. Demonstrating the power of faith is central to a Christian’s life. When we live with a humble and joyful heart, our faith naturally attracts others and serves as a channel through which they can come to know God. This is, for me, my greatest ongoing challenge: many of my colleagues, friends, fellow believers, and even close family members have not seen in my behavior a full reflection of the image of Christ.

Part Four: Repentance Is the Foundation of Faith

There is a saying: “Think out of the box”—meaning that when faced with a problem, one must not confine one’s thinking to the boundaries of the problem itself but must consider it from God’s perspective: What truly matters? The same applies to our faith and works: the answers come from seeking God.

Repentance is an exceedingly important aspect of drawing near to God in our spiritual lives. I came to realize that my need for repentance was not just a momentary emotional impulse—it became clear when I examined my faults that no single change in a particular misdeed could make me perfect. Repentance is not simply about recognizing one specific sin; it means that every day we must seek God’s will, follow His guidance, and continually cast aside the pride we clung to as if it were a badge of honor or an emotional crutch.

The posture of repentance is not a dramatic “chest-beating” outburst, but a gradual, holistic surrender of our own authority in every area of life. It is not merely an acknowledgment of our shortcomings, nor is it an adjustment to meet worldly standards of superficial harmony. Rather, it is a complete trust in God—the firm belief that His guidance is the very foundation of our inner peace and joy, and that He alone is our ultimate standard of repentance.

Thus, repentance is a comprehensive transformation of the heart—a complete surrender of our own control over our thoughts, words, and actions. When we truly repent, our faith ceases to be superficial, and our actions are not in vain. Under God’s guidance, our wisdom and abilities will be used appropriately—by humbling ourselves before Him and obtaining genuine strength.

Repentance: A Radical Turn from Past Unrighteousness toward God

If we discover that our spouse, or other family or friends, have remained unbelieving for years, we should not measure ourselves by worldly standards of whether we are living as Christ’s true disciple. Instead, we need to return to Christ in self-examination. Emulating the essence of Christ is not mere imitation but involves looking to Him and surrendering to His will. When we relinquish every part of our personal authority to Him, the results of repentance will come naturally and organically, rather than as a form of rigid, dogmatic self-correction. Just as the Jewish people struggled to meet Moses’ standards by strictly

following the 613 oral laws—often falling short because their hearts and minds were not renewed by a new “ruler”—

So, returning to our opening topic, we now understand the role that repentance plays. It is Jesus Christ who gives us the courage to repent, a process that is continually fostered through daily Bible reading, prayer, and worship gatherings to nurture our relationship with the Lord.

May every member of the body have the courage to undergo a “bone-washing” kind of repentance—letting their true faith manifest in word and deed. May our lives serve as a channel through which others may come to know God, and may all glory be given to His name.

Let us pray together!

How Can One “Cleanse” to Become Holy?

In our daily lives, we often place great emphasis on external cleanliness. We bathe, wear clean clothes, and make sure we appear neat and proper in front of others. However, the word “holy” (or “sanctified”) conjures up far more than just outward purity. Holiness does not merely mean physical cleanliness; it points to a deeper purity of the soul—a cleansing that no external method can achieve.

Clearly, the title elevates the concept: using the idea of washing to determine whether one is “holy” is somewhat too refined. It also denies the possibility of achieving true sanctification solely by washing the body. No matter how many times one cleanses oneself physically, the dirt, sorrow, anxiety, and desires deep within the heart and soul cannot be washed away. There is also a ritual called baptism in which people publicly receive Jesus Christ as their Savior and become His disciples. The caution is this: regardless of the form—if a person’s focus is on the body far more than on whether their inner self is purified—they are separated from true holiness.

- **“Holiness” is the key that Jesus Christ has given His disciples for fellowship with Him and is the shortcut to a joyful life in the world.**
- **“Holiness” means that the heart is filled with the indwelling of Jesus, which empowers one to face every circumstance with faith.**
- **“Holiness” implies an unshakable trust in Jesus so that, no matter the circumstance, one can live joyfully.**

In other words, this kind of “holiness” arises from a return to a pure, childlike perspective on the world—a simplicity and innocence that is free from the complications of accumulated worldly concerns, and a heart filled with a longing for the guidance of our Heavenly Father. It is the result of a life filled with the Spirit. Today, let us discuss the following:



Inner Holiness: A Return to Childlike Simplicity

Jesus said,

“Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 18:3)

This reminds us that the purity of our inner heart and our complete dependence on God are essential conditions for entering the Kingdom of Heaven. A little child’s heart is pure—they have no complex motives or calculations; they view the world with curiosity and complete trust. More importantly, their dependence on and trust in their parents is absolute and unreserved.

However, as we grow older, our thoughts become complicated by worldly experiences—and are even tainted by sin. This complexity causes us to hesitate and doubt when we respond to God’s call. Various evil forces in the world continually try to lead us away from God’s path, enticing us to chase after wealth, power, reputation, and pleasures. Though these things may seem important to the world, they often lead us away from God and mire us in the quicksand of desire. One who desires to be “holy” is not one who completely shuns the world; rather, such a person can interact with it while keeping their focus solely on God. When the evil voices of the world attempt to disturb our inner peace, we must immediately turn our gaze to our Heavenly

Father, seeking His protection and guidance—much like a child who turns to find their parent.

For us adult believers, returning to that childlike simplicity is not easy. Over time we accumulate worldly experiences that make us guarded and self-interested; we even hesitate and doubt when God calls, with our past experiences and hard-won “wisdom” sometimes making us appear to the young as stubborn “old fogies.”

I recall Nicodemus once asking in secret, “How can someone be born again when they are old? Can they enter their mother’s womb a second time?” (John 3:4). His question reveals the fear of change within our hearts. How can one expect to enjoy a life of freedom and joy if one is unwilling to undergo a radical transformation?

Repentance: Lifting Our Gaze and Surrendering Our Hearts

This transformation begins when we “turn back to God.” Repentance does not simply mean that our behavior conforms to the Mosaic Law in every outward detail. Rather, it means that our inner way of thinking—our attitudes, our very thoughts—is transformed before God. Such repentance is an inward turning, a complete surrender in which we choose, like taking a side in a conflict, to stand with God and heed the inner promptings of our hearts. It is from this position of putting God first that loving actions naturally follow.

When we lift our eyes to God and surrender our hearts entirely to Him, our actions begin to align with His law—not because we force ourselves to obey rules, but because we sincerely desire to please God and live according to His will.

Remembering Our Baptismal Identity

Dear brothers and sisters, if you have been baptized, you may recall the moment when, guided by the one who administers the baptism, you stepped into the water and held your breath as you went under, allowing the water to envelop your entire body. That brief moment of “suffocation” in the water precedes your emergence, when you immediately shake off the water from your face and gasp for the fresh, life-giving air of rebirth.

Yes, that is the process of baptism—an experience of the body being submerged. Yet more importantly, baptism signifies the washing of the soul. It is as if, as your body is “buried” in water, all the survival skills and life experiences you have learned in the world are also meant to be buried. Along with them must die your claim over life itself—a kind of resetting, as though your computer were cleared and restored to factory settings before being loaded with a new operating system from God. This process is swift and resolute—a decision even more determined than that moment of “dedication prayer”—because the sacrament of baptism is like a condensed version of dying and being reborn.

From that moment when you draw in your first breath of fresh air, you become a new creation with a childlike heart. You no longer judge people by your own preferences or standards, for your judgment has been renewed by God’s Word. This is the childlike state that pleases Jesus.

Of course, you will still face disturbances from Satan. After all, how could Satan ever be easily expelled from a person’s heart? He may join forces with other “demons” dwelling in people’s hearts to attack and tempt you until he reoccupies that inner space, replacing God’s “operating system” much like a virus invading—a deadly tumor that will constantly seek to capture your newly “sanctified” self, until once again defeated by God’s Word.

This is the recurring struggle—a daily task for every person born again. And it is not to say that someone who was baptized long ago is forever free from these struggles; no, you are always a new creation. Always remember: you are a reborn, holy person endowed with God’s “CPU” (Central Processing Unit). Unless you continually “welcome” and expel those viral temptations, your inner self is at risk.

Thus, every day you have an opportunity to be renewed—cleansed by the Lord’s Word, resilient against Satan’s attacks—and live a life set apart for Him.



Conclusion

Dear brothers and sisters, let us reexamine our hearts. Let us not only focus on our external cleanliness, but also seek genuine inner holiness. Repentance is not merely an adjustment of our actions—it is an inward turning, a complete surrender. Let us, like little children, depend solely on our Heavenly Father, heed His call, and be willing to repent and cleanse ourselves in His light. When we face the temptations of the world, may we immediately turn to God, seeking His guidance and protection. May our lives, marked by our unwavering focus on God, serve as a testimony to His glory—living out truly holy lives. Let us pray together for this!

Tillich's and Dawson's exposition of the relationship between religion and culture

Religion and culture share an inextricable link. Religion is not only the substance of culture but also its mode of expression. Religious beliefs shape human values, ethics, artistic expression, and many other cultural dimensions, while culture, as a carrier, enables their transmission and dissemination. The American theologian Paul Tillich holds that religion, as the core of culture, supplies a profound spiritual support for it; meanwhile, the British historian Christopher Dawson further argues that religion forms the very foundation of civilization, even defining its characteristics. However, when a country attempts to maintain regime stability by restricting or suppressing religious belief, this connection is gravely challenged, leading to a series of social issues.

I. The Symbiotic Relationship Between Religion and Culture

1. Religion as the Core of Culture:

Religion provides a deep spiritual foundation for culture, being its very essence. The diverse and complex manifestations at the surface level of culture are precisely the reflections of the profound layers imbued with religious significance. Through religion, culture is elevated beyond mere worldly material pursuits, becoming a vital component of the human spiritual realm.

2. Culture as the Expression of Religion:

Culture is not only the vehicle for religion but also its external expression. Religion communicates its core beliefs and values through various cultural forms such as art, music, literature, and ethics. These forms of expression enable the widespread dissemination of religious faith and leave lasting impacts across different civilizations.

II. Social Problems Caused by the Suppression of Religious Freedom in the Oceanic State

When a society's religious beliefs are repressed, its cultural foundation and spiritual pillars are severely weakened, which in

turn can trigger a series of social problems. In the Oceanic State depicted in George Orwell's novel *1984*, restrictions on religious belief and freedom of speech are particularly pronounced. The state not only fails to promote the traditional cultural elements accumulated over more than 2000 years but also does not support open religious freedom; it even suppresses expression of opinions that relate to people's ideological views. This situation prevents voices from various social strata from emerging, resulting in multiple issues:

1. Reduction in Cultural Diversity:

The Oceanic State once possessed a rich cultural heritage, including a multicultural system that encompassed various religions. However, in its current social climate, these cultural elements are not adequately nurtured. The state tends to replace religious belief and traditional culture with political ideologies, leading to a gradual erosion of cultural diversity. Without cultural diversity, society's creativity and intellectual vitality weaken, and the singularity of culture leaves people's spiritual world impoverished.

2. Weakening of Social Cohesion:

Historically, traditional religious and cultural beliefs provided the Oceanic society with a powerful source of cohesion. When these beliefs are restricted or replaced by enforced political stances, social cohesion begins to disintegrate. People lose the sense of belonging derived from a common spiritual faith, and imposed political positions fail to resonate deeply. The decline in social cohesion exacerbates gaps and conflicts among various social strata and groups.

3. Confusion in Moral Values:

In the absence of religious and cultural spiritual guidance, moral values become increasingly blurred and chaotic. The traditional moral system loses its influence due to the suppression of religious belief, while the moral concepts promoted by the state are often heavily tainted with political overtones, making them difficult to widely accept. This leads to a decline in the overall moral standard of society, where many individuals, lacking the restraint of spiritual belief, become prone to moral crises and

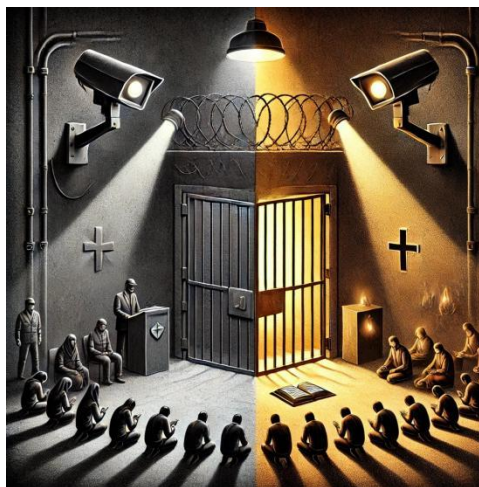
even extreme behaviors—such as commodifying human bodies, their organs, or even corpses for profit.

4. Increase in Mental Health Issues:

For many, religious belief serves as an important spiritual solace, providing psychological support when facing pressures and challenges. However, when such belief is suppressed, people easily fall into confusion and anxiety. Especially in a society where free expression of thought is curtailed, mental health issues become even more prominent. The lack of spiritual sustenance and freedom of expression makes it difficult for individuals to relieve their psychological stress, further intensifying societal mental health problems.

5. Threats to Social Order and Stability:

In an environment where religious beliefs and freedom of speech are restricted, dissatisfaction within society is prone to build up. When people cannot express their thoughts and beliefs through normal channels, extreme ideologies and radical behaviors might emerge as outlets for their frustration. This not only jeopardizes the stability of social order but also may lead to prolonged social unrest.



III. The Necessity and Urgency of Religious Freedom

When discussing the necessity of religious freedom, one must not only recognize its role in enriching individual spiritual lives and promoting cultural diversity but also understand its significance for social and national stability. In fact, safeguarding religious freedom will not weaken those in power; rather, it

enhances their legitimacy and social acceptance, thereby promoting harmonious development in society.

1. Restoration of Cultural Diversity and Vitality:

Guaranteeing religious freedom can restore cultural diversity, allowing a full display of various cultural expressions. A diverse cultural landscape can stimulate societal creativity and foster the free exchange of ideas, driving social progress and prosperity. Without diversity, society loses momentum, and thought becomes increasingly stagnant.

2. Enhancement of Social Cohesion and Stability:

Religious beliefs provide people with a shared spiritual foundation and moral guidance, which in turn strengthens social cohesion. In a society that respects religious freedom, faith can not only help individuals discover meaning and purpose in life but also promote overall societal harmony and stability. Social stability should not be maintained solely by coercive governance but rather through allowing people spiritual freedom that fosters a genuine sense of communal identity and belonging.

3. Promotion of the Legitimacy and Credibility of Those in Power:

When people feel that their religious beliefs and basic human rights are respected, their trust and support for the government naturally increase. The protection of religious freedom enhances the legitimacy of those in power, making them rely not only on control but also on broad societal recognition and support. This boost in legitimacy and credibility helps the ruling class gain greater respect and opportunities for cooperation both domestically and internationally.

4. Rebuilding the Moral System and Social Order:

By respecting religious freedom, society can reconstruct its moral system to safeguard social order. The moral values promoted by religion can supplement the legal and normative frameworks of society, helping individuals make the right choices amid complex social scenarios. When moral values are reestablished, social order becomes more stable, and the overall societal atmosphere improves. More importantly, a higher moral standard among the people contributes to reducing crime rates and bolstering the community's overall sense of security.

5. Protection of Mental Health and Social Harmony:

The spiritual solace provided by religious belief enables people to cope with life's pressures and challenges, thus maintaining mental health. A society that permits the coexistence of multiple religious beliefs is better able to meet the spiritual needs of its people, reducing factors that contribute to social instability and enhancing overall harmony. Only in an environment that respects free thought and belief can individuals' mental health be properly safeguarded, thereby improving overall well-being.

6. Fostering Critical Thinking and Civic Awareness:

When freedom of speech is suppressed and thought is forced to conform, the society's capacity for critical thinking diminishes sharply. Protecting religious freedom promotes diversity in thought and free expression, which in turn elevates citizens' ability to critically assess government and societal phenomena. In a healthy society, citizens can engage in independent thinking and criticism, thereby driving social progress and reform. Those in power should recognize that constructive critique and divergent opinions do not threaten political stability; rather, they are a powerful source of social advancement and improvement.

IV. Can Authoritarian Rule Replace Religious Freedom?

1. Fundamental Differences Between Regime and Religion:

The core aim of authoritarian rule is to maintain concentration and stability of power, whereas religious belief seeks spiritual transcendence and the salvation of the soul. A regime may control social behavior through coercive methods, laws, and policies, but it is unlikely to reach into the inner lives of people. In contrast, religious belief profoundly influences an individual's values, lifestyle, and provides spiritual consolation and moral guidance. Hence, while authoritarian regimes may temporarily sustain their power by suppressing, replacing, or controlling religious practice, they can hardly supplant the deep-seated role of religious belief in personal hearts.

2. Consequences of Suppressing Religious Freedom:

When the "Big Brother" regime of the Oceanic State attempts to replace religious freedom, it typically enacts measures such as forcefully promoting a state ideology, suppressing religious

activities, and restricting the scope and depth of religious institutions' preaching. However, these measures often lead to the following outcomes:

- **Spiritual Backlash:**

When religious beliefs are suppressed, adherents may find their faith strengthened, leading to a strong internal reaction. This backlash is not only observed on an individual level but can also evolve into collective movements of religious revival, even fostering the expansion and dissemination of underground religious activities.

- **Exacerbation of Social Conflicts:**

When the governing class attempts to supplant religious belief with state ideology, societal divisions and antagonisms tend to intensify. The conflicts between faith communities and the ruling powers gradually intensify, and the mounting social discontent may erupt into larger-scale conflicts, threatening political stability.

- **Destruction of Cultural Foundations:**

Religious belief is often the very root and source of a culture's spirit; when such belief is suppressed, culture itself withers. Although the ruling powers might try to fill the void with substitute cultural forms, such forms typically lack deep spiritual substance and historical accumulation, making them unsustainable.

V. Envisioning the Survival and Development of Christian Believers Under Oceanic State Authoritarian Rule

1. The Perseverance and Flexibility of Faith:

Under the authoritarian regime of the Oceanic State, Christian believers face enormous pressure and challenges. History shows, however, that believers can survive and develop even in tight spaces by steadfastly maintaining their faith while adapting flexibly to their circumstances:

- **The Rise of House Churches and “Semi-Autonomous” Churches:**

In situations where public religious activities are restricted, house churches become an important avenue for Christian gatherings. These informal religious groups maintain the

continuity and development of the Christian faith through small-scale meetings, private exchanges of belief, and flexible evangelism. Meanwhile, “semi-autonomous” churches—recognized by the government—should primarily focus on nurturing the spiritual growth of their members.

○ **Discreet Expression of Faith:**

Believers may express their faith in low-key ways, such as practicing Christian ethics in everyday life, being salt and light in their work and social circles, and influencing others through their words and actions by conveying the core values of their faith.

2. **Balancing Faith with Social Participation:**

For Christian believers under authoritarian rule, balancing faith and social involvement is critical. They need to maintain their faith while cautiously engaging with the surrounding environment to avoid unnecessary conflicts and dangers:

○ **Focusing on Social Justice:**

Christians can participate in social services and public welfare activities as a practical expression of Christ’s love and justice, thereby advancing social righteousness. Although such activities may face restrictions under authoritarian rule, believers can still contribute to social harmony and justice through legally permissible means.

○ **Inner Freedom Coupled with Outward Submission:**

Believers should remember the freedom within their hearts—steadfast in their faith and loyalty to Christ. At the same time, they should heed the biblical teaching to “submit to authorities,” thereby striving to coexist peacefully with the external social environment without compromising the core principles of their faith.

3. **Unity and Mutual Support Among Believers:**

Faced with oppression, it is crucial for Christian believers to strengthen solidarity and support one another to counter external challenges:

○ **Establishing Faith Communities:**

Believers can create and maintain close-knit faith communities that offer mutual support and encouragement, enabling them to face adversities together. Within these communities, individuals

can share testimonials of faith, pray for each other, and progress together in their spiritual journeys.

- **Active Participation in Global Christian Networks:**
In an era when international religious freedom is receiving increasing attention, believers can engage with global Christian networks to garner external support and assistance, thereby strengthening the resilience of their faith and broadening its reach.

Conclusion

Religious freedom is not only a fundamental individual right but also a crucial guarantee for social stability and cultural prosperity. Although the authoritarian ruling class in the Oceanic State may temporarily maintain its power by suppressing religious freedom, in the long run, such practices cannot substitute for the profound influence that religious belief holds over individual hearts and cultural landscapes. On the contrary, suppressing faith is more likely to exacerbate social conflicts, erode culture, and create moral disarray.

For Christian believers under authoritarian rule, survival and development depend on a dual approach: steadfast adherence to their faith coupled with flexible adaptation to external conditions. By uniting, offering mutual support, and striking a balance between faith and societal participation, they not only manage to survive in narrow spaces but also contribute positively to long-term social stability and cultural prosperity.

In short, safeguarding religious freedom is both a matter of respecting individual rights and laying the foundation for a healthy societal development. In a society that values freedom of thought and belief, individuals can express their faith openly, culture can flourish in its diversity, society can achieve greater harmony and stability, and governance will be more enduring and robust.

Let us all pray together for this cause!

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Supplementary Information:

The two scholars mentioned at the beginning of the article—Paul Tillich and Christopher Dawson—are renowned for their insightful perspectives on the relationship between religion and culture. Here is a brief overview of their profiles:

Paul Tillich (1886–1965):

Paul Tillich was a prominent German-American theologian and philosopher of the 20th century whose ideas profoundly influenced modern theology and philosophy. Tillich proposed the view that “religion is the substance of culture,” asserting that religion is the core of culture and the deep force that determines its form. According to Tillich, every aspect of culture—from art and law to morality and science—has a religious dimension, providing deep meaning and purpose. His theology focused on the essence of existence and how humans address their “ultimate concern.” He believed that religion is key to answering fundamental existential questions, while culture represents the concrete expression of that religion. His major works include:

1. **The Courage to Be (1952):** One of Tillich’s most famous works, in which he explores human courage in the face of non-being (such as death, anxiety, and despair). In this book, he views religion as a means by which humans confront these existential challenges and explains religion’s profound role in culture.
2. **Systematic Theology (1951–1963):** A three-volume work that comprehensively articulates Tillich’s theological thought. In this series, he systematically explores themes such as religion and culture, existence and the divine, and examines how religion provides deep meaning and foundational support for culture.
3. **The New Being: Lectures in Christian Theology (1955):** In this work, Tillich discusses the relationship between Christian theology and modern culture, proposing that religion expresses its deep spiritual significance through cultural forms.

Christopher Dawson (1889–1970): Christopher Dawson was an English historian and cultural critic known for his studies on the impact of religion on civilization. Dawson argued that religion is the foundation of every civilization and, to some extent, defines

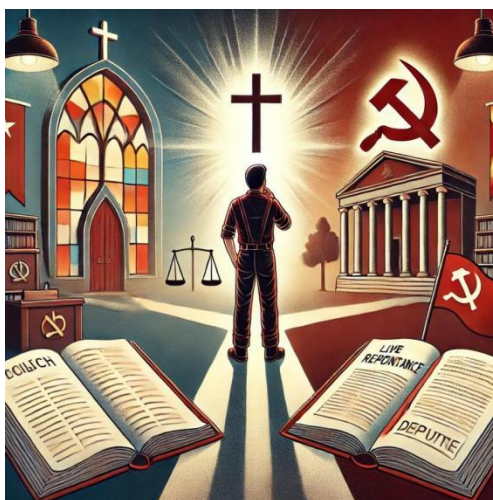
the characteristics of that civilization. His writings explore how different religions have shaped their respective cultures and assert that the rise and fall of civilizations are inextricably linked to the fortunes of religion. In Dawson's view, when a civilization loses its religious foundation, it faces the crisis of decline and fragmentation. His major works include:

1. **Religion and the Rise of Western Culture (1950):** One of Dawson's representative works in which he investigates how medieval Christianity laid the foundations of Western civilization and influenced the development of European culture. Dawson argues that religion is the key to understanding the rise and fall of Western civilization.
2. **Progress and Religion (1929):** In this book, Dawson criticizes modern society's secularization and overreliance on technological progress, emphasizing the importance of a robust religious foundation for the advancement of civilization.
3. **The Making of Europe (1932):** This work analyzes the formation of European civilization, with particular emphasis on the role of Christianity in shaping European culture and social structures. Dawson explores how religion provided the spiritual and moral guidance essential to the development of European civilization.

Both scholars' ideas underscore the central role of religion in culture and its importance in maintaining social order and fostering the development of civilization. Their works remind us that any attempt to preserve regime power through the suppression of religion will ultimately lead to social unrest and cultural decay. Interested readers are encouraged to explore their writings for further insights.

No Need to Wander Between Faith and Duty: A Letter to Christian Party Members

In China there are eight major democratic parties. These refer to the eight political parties that participate in the multiparty cooperation system aside from the Communist Party of China (CPC). These parties, which accept the leadership of the CPC, are considered the consultative parties in China's socialist system with Chinese characteristics. Today, many Christians are also members of one of these democratic parties, while a considerable number are Communist Party members. When gathered together, a profound inner conflict often emerges: at work, they might feel that certain words or actions betray their faith; yet during worship or Bible study, they feel that their faith seems at odds with their identity as Communist Party members. In plain language, it may be expressed as “feeling unworthy of Jesus in front of the party organization, but feeling guilty before the party while worshipping.” This inner conflict and struggle is a real issue frequently faced by Christian party members—some even consider quitting or abandoning their faith. In fact, such a sense of contradiction need not exist at all. At its core, the faith holds that all authority comes from God. One must learn to hold fast to one's faith in a complex environment and live out one's true self. If you, or your family or friends, are Christian Communist Party members experiencing the above dilemmas, please consider the following discussion:



I. Understanding the Nature of the Party and the Essence of Faith

First, it is necessary to understand the nature of the Communist Party of China as a political organization. The party (or organization) is a tool for social governance and a manifestation of the political system. As party members, they carry the responsibility of putting the party's policies and decisions into practice. The functions and roles of the party primarily focus on national governance, policy implementation, and social management, rather than controlling individual beliefs.

In contrast, Christian faith is a pursuit concerning the soul and the meaning of life—a sacred relationship between the individual and God. Faith is an inner spiritual activity; it represents a free choice and spiritual pursuit that transcends any earthly organization. In reality, the party and faith belong to two completely different domains—one pertaining to political and social governance on earth, and the other pertaining to heavenly spiritual pursuits and personal religious freedom.

II. The Rights and Responsibilities of Party Members

As Chinese citizens, according to Article 36 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of China, "Citizens of the People's Republic of China enjoy freedom of religious belief." This constitutional clause provides legal protection for the freedom of belief for all citizens. Every party member enjoys the constitutional right to religious freedom—this is an inalienable basic right. Party members can very well maintain their personal faith in their hearts and lives, pursuing spiritual peace and the salvation of their souls. Faith is a choice regarding one's personal view of life and values; it is a deep-seated spiritual need.

By the way, the situation in the United States is similar—religious freedom is also viewed as one of the fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution. The First Amendment of the United States Constitution clearly stipulates that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." This is regarded as the fundamental legal basis for religious freedom in the United States. The concept of religious freedom is deeply

rooted in Western Enlightenment thought, emphasizing the absolute right of an individual's conscience and choice of belief without government interference.

Even within China's traditional culture, freedom of belief has its own unique expressions. Although different dynasties in history had varying religious policies, the coexistence of the three traditions—Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism—has long been an important characteristic of Chinese society. Confucian thought advocates “benevolence” and emphasizes personal moral cultivation and inner freedom; Taoism promotes “wu-wei” (non-action) and the pursuit of harmony between the individual and nature; while Buddhism places greater emphasis on spiritual awakening and salvation. The inclusiveness of traditional culture has historically created a relatively open environment for religious belief in China.

However, as a Communist Party member, one must also understand the duties and obligations of a party member. The duty of a party member is to work within the framework of the party's policies and regulations, maintain the party's unity and discipline, and advance the political goals of the party. Therefore, although party members enjoy the freedom of religious belief, this does not mean that they may arbitrarily bring their personal religious beliefs into the party's work and activities. As a Christian party member, one must carefully maintain the boundary between faith and work, ensuring that personal belief does not interfere with the leadership and work of the party.

III. How to Find a Balance Between Faith and Duty

In this context, the key for Christian party members lies in balancing one's faith with one's political responsibilities. You can very well exhibit Christian virtues—such as honesty, diligence, justice, and love—in your work and daily life. These values not only align with Christian teachings but also meet the party's requirements and society's expectations. At work, you can demonstrate the excellent character and spiritual strength of a Christian through your deeds without directly introducing religious belief into party work.

You can also maintain your faith practice in your personal life and within your church—engaging in prayer, reading the Bible, attending worship services, and so on. This inner expression of faith is your right and should not be restricted by your political identity. However, in public settings and during party activities, you must continue to respect the party’s discipline and policies. This is both your responsibility as a party member and a sign of respect toward the party organization.

IV. Remain Sincere Before God and Loyal in Your Work

As a Christian party member, always remember that God’s sovereignty transcends all earthly authority, while the party is a political organization that serves the people in this world. You can be faithful to God in your religious life and loyal to the party in fulfilling your political responsibilities. God calls us to be honest, upright, and loving, while the party requires its members to serve the people and maintain progressive and untainted ideals. The two do not necessarily conflict; the crucial point is how you live out your faith while simultaneously fulfilling your party duties.

You do not need to feel opposed to your faith because of your party membership, nor do you have to feel that you cannot perform your duties as a party member because of your faith. On the contrary, you can very well find a balance within this unique identity—being both a loyal party member and a sincere Christian.

V. Repent and Turn Back to God

One of the core principles of the Christian faith is repentance and following the call of Jesus. As a Christian party member, you should always remember that you are not merely an ordinary believer but a disciple of Jesus Christ. Being a disciple of Jesus means that you need to constantly reflect on your behavior and lifestyle, repenting for those aspects that do not conform to the teachings and principles of Christianity, and turning back to God.

This repentance is not a negative attitude but an active process—meaning that in every moment of life, you must strive to live out

the teachings of Jesus: loving others as yourself, practicing justice, showing compassion, and walking humbly with God. Such repentance and transformation not only help you grow in your personal faith but also enable you to serve others and society more effectively as a party member. After all, fulfilling the obligations of a party member may well be part of God's calling—and they must not be artificially separated.

VI. Live Out a Harmonious Testimony and Become a Faithful Disciple

Overall, as a Christian party member, you are fully entitled to enjoy the freedom of belief granted by the Constitution, but you must also conscientiously perform your duties as a party member, maintaining the advanced and pure qualities expected of a Communist Party member. Understand that the party is a political form—being a party member means adhering to the party's discipline and requirements—while faith concerns personal choices about the soul and life, representing an inner freedom and pursuit. You can certainly balance these two aspects, finding strength in your faith while demonstrating loyalty through your work.

More importantly, as a Christian, you should always remember that you are a disciple of Jesus. Constantly pursue renewal through repentance and transformation—living out the example of Christ and manifesting your faith in your workplace. May you find inner peace and strength in this balance, live out your true self, and become a witness who is faithful both to your beliefs and your duties. No matter what challenges you face, always remember your identity and mission before God, as well as your responsibilities and obligations in the party organization, so that you may become a light and salt that glorifies God in this world. As Jesus taught: “In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:16)



Let us pray together for this!

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For Example:

When you were in middle school, teachers and parents were very strict about “early love.” Yet by the time you reach university, they tend to be less “concerned” and even urge you to find a partner as soon as possible. Why is that? In middle school, teachers and parents were anxious about whether students could graduate successfully and be admitted to university, so they aimed to eliminate any factors—such as early love—that might affect this outcome. Although the teachers and parents, having gone through it themselves, knew that children at that age are “in the tender age of blossoming emotions,” they feared that if your academic performance suffered and you lost the starting line for university admission, they would be held responsible. The weight of responsibility was enormous. However, once you enter university, the situation changes completely: teachers and parents consider you to have reached the age of 18 and thus capable of making independent decisions. In other words, even if your studies suffer or you fail to graduate, it is no longer entirely their responsibility. In such a situation, early love can even be seen as a stabilizing factor. In essence, early love violates the “interests” of teachers or parents—that seems to be the underlying principle, right?

Different environments entail different rights and obligations; this is also a kind of “law.”

Has the Characteristic Situation of “Autonomy, Self-Support, and Self-Propagation” Been Realized?

Below are the basic concepts and understandings that form the foundation of this discussion.

Today's sharing comes from the perspective of a Buddhist on the church and its potential avenues for improvement. For readers' convenience, it is necessary first to describe the basic situation of China's “Three-Self” churches and house churches, the attitude of government departments, and the direction in which the church should adjust.

Part I: China's “Three-Self” Churches and House Churches

The “Three-Self” Church refers to the Chinese Christian (broadly defined) churches that uphold the “Three-Self” principles—autonomy, self-support, and self-propagation—and are often also called the “Three-Self Patriotic Church.” This form of church emerged after the founding of the People's Republic of China, as Chinese Christianity sought to shed its semi-colonial, Western image, and, by realizing autonomy, self-support, and self-propagation, to unite believers nationwide under the banner of patriotism in an active movement of loving both the country and the faith. Since 1949, Chinese churches have no longer been subordinate to the Roman Curia or foreign Christian missionary societies. Simply put, China's “Three-Self” church has no connection with the Vatican; it is a form of Christianity and Catholicism with Chinese characteristics. At the national level, the organized “Three-Self Patriotic Church” for Protestantism includes the China Christian Council (CCC) and the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM), collectively often referred to as “the two associations.” For Catholicism, there are the Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association, the Chinese Catholic Bishops Conference, and the Chinese Catholic Administrative Committee (collectively “the two associations and one committee”).

As an important component of Chinese Christianity, the “Three-Self” church has long adhered to the fine traditions of loving the country and the faith. Over more than 70 years of history, the “Three-Self” church has experienced countless

challenges and difficulties. Although it is separated from the Vatican and Jerusalem, it has continuously maintained its faith and distinctive principles. Its contribution to religious harmony and social stability in China is a matter of perspective—everyone sees it differently. This view rests on a single standard: just as every coin has two sides, no one can deny that such a dichotomy exists.

(If you wish to learn more about the statutes of the China Christian Council and the Three-Self Patriotic Movement, please visit the related information on the official China Christianity website.)

Although the overt “semi-colonial” situation that provided the basis for establishing the “Three-Self” church is long gone, that definition remains in force as a reminder for believers to guard against semi-colonial mentalities and to uphold characteristics with Chinese characteristics. At its core, the definition dictates that Christianity should be “patriotic” and that religious activities should be carried out under the premise of safeguarding national security and interests. Looking at the historical development of Christianity abroad, the church has repeatedly experienced situations of “politics controlling the church,” “theocratic unity,” “politics subordinate to the church,” and “separation of church and state”—all of which have existed to varying degrees in different countries and historical periods. Against this historical and contemporary background, the emergence of this definition indeed has its significance. In the current situation—especially after China’s accession to the WTO when international relations are changing—the nation needs both close integration with the international community and measures to prevent excessive ideological fusion. Religion is a field in which management should be strengthened, especially for Christianity (including Catholicism), while Islam follows with similar basic requirements despite its varying scale relative to the Christian community. Although Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism have already been indigenized and have a history of more than 2000 years among the people, they too have similar requirements. It is now common to see temples and Taoist halls displaying the national flag. In this regard, the state treats them

in a “non-discriminatory” manner. Therefore, the government’s requirement to display the national flag in churches is a legitimate demand—Christian believers should not see it as a restriction on their faith imposed by the state for its own interests.

Even if one were to redefine the situation by omitting the term “semi-colonial,” there would still be an international context as a premise. Thus, the mission before Chinese Christian believers (including those in house churches to be discussed below) is to convert the current tension—between the gradual stagnation of spiritual growth and the urgent desire to expand, and the state’s wish for rapid, stable development while expanding its political influence internationally—into a driving force for both sides as soon as possible.



In comparison, there is also the case of house churches. One common definition is: in mainland China, a house church refers to a Christian church spontaneously organized by believers that has not received official government approval or recognition. This term originates from the characteristic that in its early days, such gatherings were often held in believers’ homes. Although later the meeting places might not be limited to houses, the term “house church” has continued in use.

The term “house church” is a political concept rather than a denomination or a unified religious organization in the usual sense. It refers to Christian organizations within mainland China

that are not affiliated with the state-recognized “Three-Self” churches. The background is as follows: after Christianity was formally introduced into China by the British missionary Robert Morrison in 1807, it underwent several developmental stages. The prototype of the house church can be traced back to the 1920s, when, to free themselves from the influence of overseas missionaries and mission organizations, self-reliant gatherings and churches based on family units began to emerge in various regions. After the founding of the People’s Republic of China, the formation and development of house churches became closely tied to government religious policies, experiencing stages of initial formation, closed development, revival, and public development.

Based on differences in political attitudes, theological views, and modes of operation, house churches can generally be classified into the following types:

- **Auxiliary House Churches:** These are essentially family gatherings held under the “Three-Self” umbrella. The believers recognize and adhere to the “Three-Self” stance. Due to limitations such as the number of church facilities, time, locality, and physical conditions, meetings are organized at home or in small venues. Although these gatherings do not fully conform to state religious policy, they are generally tacitly regarded by the government as normal auxiliary religious activities under the “Three-Self” framework.
- **Intermediate House Churches:** These churches maintain an ambiguous attitude toward the “Three-Self” principles—they neither support nor oppose them, insisting on what they call “genuine faith.” Although such churches are not formally registered and are technically illegal, they initially largely complied with religious policies in terms of management. In recent years, they have frequently engaged in cross-regional evangelism and established contacts with overseas religious organizations.
- **Confrontational House Churches:** These directly take a stand against the “Three-Self” system—even opposing the government. They are mostly developed with the support of

foreign or hostile religious forces, carrying a strong political motive and posing real dangers.

- **Heterodox House Churches:** These use the name “house church” to cloak the propagation of erroneous teachings. They are usually characterized by chaotic management and lack of supervision, making them susceptible to the formation of cult-like organizations.

The existence and development of house churches have had multifaceted impacts on contemporary Chinese society. For some believers, house churches provide a more flexible and convenient mode of religious activity that helps them maintain and deepen their faith. It can be affirmed that, to a considerable extent, the vast majority of house churches have promoted harmony and mutual support within communities and workplaces. However, from the perspective of government regulatory departments, house churches, which lack unified management and standardized guidance—and whose members have not fully understood the requirements and legal norms that govern religious activities in the society in which they live and work—are feared to spiral out of control and even foster the creation of cult organizations. Fundamentally, the government has discovered that some house churches are colluding with overseas religious forces to engage in activities that violate state laws and regulations, endangering national security and social stability; hence, there is a need to tighten control. Moreover, the cross-regional evangelism and illegal construction of church buildings by house churches have exacerbated the disorder and conflicts in the religious sector. In one sentence, there is a lack of mutual understanding and communication between house churches and the government’s regulatory departments—a point I will explain further below.

In response to the problems and challenges facing house churches, government and various sectors of society should adopt the following strategies. The government should strengthen its supervision of house churches, standardize their religious activities, and prevent the emergence of cults or the conduct of illegal activities. It should encourage and support exchanges and integration between house churches and legally

recognized organizations such as the “Three-Self” churches, to jointly promote the healthy development of Chinese Christianity. In addition, education and training for believers should be enhanced to improve their religious literacy and ability to discern, preventing them from being misled by cult organizations. Through strengthening community development and promoting the integration of religion with a socialist society, the aim is to foster harmony and stability in the religious sphere.

To reiterate, the “Three-Self” church—or “Three-Self Patriotic Church”—specifically refers to Chinese Christian churches that are not subject to foreign church administration and interference, that operate under the principles of “autonomy, self-support, and self-propagation.” It is the only legally recognized Christian church in the People’s Republic of China; any other form of Christian church is considered illegal. Before the establishment of the People’s Republic of China, churches such as the Chinese Independent Church and the Christian Assembly, which used the principles of “self-reliance, self-support, and self-propagation,” could be classified as “Chinese Independent Churches” to distinguish them.

Part II: Common Issues and Proposed Measures Facing Both “Three-Self” Churches and House Churches



(Christians on Chinese soil worship together to bless the next generation)

As mentioned above, China's Christian churches—especially those under the auspices of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement—nominally represent the patriotic and faith-loving organization of Chinese Christians. They emphasize the “Sinicization” of Christianity and insist on the principles of autonomy, self-support, and self-propagation, managing their affairs independently. However, in reality, the operation of many churches reveals that government regulatory departments have deeply intervened in internal church affairs, including leasing premises, sending pastors, participating in the planning of worship spaces, and reviewing teaching materials. These interventions go far beyond administrative management and pose the problem of “laypersons managing professionals.”

It is important to recognize that religious faith is not the same as government management of public affairs. Faith relates to issues that transcend specific administrative matters—it is a matter of thought and even of the soul. The direction of its management should help believers elevate their spiritual cultivation, thereby positively influencing the moral and cultural level of the whole society. It is an inheritance that affects one generation after another. Many of the recent serious incidents of moral degradation and criminal behavior in society can be directly linked to the lack of religious faith among the people—as detailed in the article discussing Tillich's and Dawson's exposition of the relationship between religion and culture.

I am now under 60 years old. Half a century ago, the regulatory departments painted a vision of life for me that envisioned 21st-century China achieving communism and the Four Modernizations. Looking back now, who has driven the advancement and progress of China's two civilizations in these years? And what has hindered the realization of “communism”? One issue facing the government's regulatory departments is that the era of “one sentence counting as ten thousand” from the 1960s is truly over. Those who have not moved on from that time either fundamentally fail to understand the matter or are deliberately concealing that fact. They still believe that merely reciting a few dozen words of supposedly valuable slogans on the street can change one's mindset or even one's soul—but this is

wrong. What can change a person once and for all is genuine Christian faith—not a substitute for faith. True faith works like breast milk, yet capitalistic interests persuade you to substitute it with formula, which, before you know it, is tainted with poisonous additives.

Directive, planned management that departs from human nature and the ultimate pursuit of faith will directly affect the church's autonomy and the purity of its beliefs. The people call for courageous and visionary politicians to “speak up and watch over” those within the regulatory departments, urging them to think carefully and not to equate the management of religious faith with ordinary affairs. One must understand that right faith will lead to the right values and will most effectively promote rapid and steady national development.

Conversely, in this context, how should believers balance the pursuit of religious freedom and patriotism with compliance with state laws? Whether one belongs to the “Three-Self” church or is a house church believer, should one focus more on one's spiritual growth and repentance so as to better live out the Christian faith in the specific context of Chinese society? This section will offer some preliminary reflections on these issues.

1. The Current State of the “Three-Self” Church: The Paradox Between Government Involvement and Church Autonomy

The original purpose in establishing the “Three-Self” church was to realize a Sinicized form of Christianity, emphasizing the independence of the church in both faith transmission and management. Yet in practice, the autonomy and independence of the “Three-Self” church are facing challenges. Regulatory departments, by providing leased venues, dispatching pastors, and reviewing teaching materials, have deeply intervened in the church's internal affairs. Such interventions clearly exceed the proper scope of administrative management and encroach upon the core issues of spiritual guidance and the practice of faith.

This state of affairs creates a dilemma for believers of the “Three-Self” church: How can the church maintain spiritual purity between the regulatory oversight of government departments and its own autonomy? Although the intervention by regulatory departments might be intended to balance

management and faith in a politically sensitive environment, it brings enormous challenges to the church's independence and freedom of belief. In such an environment, believers often confine their practice of faith to merely following prescribed rules, thereby neglecting inner spiritual growth and an active religious life. I believe that Christians who dare to openly profess their faith are most likely those who also hope to promote the nation's prosperity—they should be the ones to live out the Great Commission and thus become the driving forces behind national construction.

2. The Predicament of House Churches: The Dual Challenge of Freedom and Surveillance

(This discussion will not address cases that have been categorized as cults. In any country, criminal organizations that deviate from the core tenets of orthodox Christianity are key targets for government crackdown.)

In contrast, house churches, as religious organizations not incorporated into the government's regulatory system, might appear to enjoy greater freedom of belief. However, this does not mean they are entirely beyond the reach of regulatory oversight. The activities and gatherings of house churches are often subject to monitoring by neighborhood committees, subdistrict offices, and even community volunteers (for example, the "ChaoYang Grannies"). Although house churches are not under direct government control, every move they make remains in the view of the regulators. Believers participating in social activities frequently impose self-restraints out of fear of potential repercussions, making it difficult for them to freely practice the love and mission of Christ.

Under these circumstances, house church believers need to be more proactive about their spiritual growth and, while abiding by laws and regulations, boldly pursue religious freedom. Such a pursuit is not merely about engaging in formal religious activities; it is about demonstrating the core values and spiritual strength of Christianity through tangible actions.

One point that house church believers should understand and support is that the regulatory departments' focus on house churches is largely aimed at preventing harm caused by cult

organizations to the public and society. Yet many house church believers tend to interpret this attention as an outright suppression of their Christian faith. Furthermore, most house churches are reluctant to draw close to the “Three-Self” churches—a stance that is understandable given the current situation where there has not yet been a suitable opportunity for mutual communication between the two groups. It is necessary, based on the principle of love, for both sides to pray for each other, at least refraining from slandering or criticizing believers attending the “Three-Self” church worship services. After all, everyone lives and worships on the same land; as “graced sinners,” believers are called to watch over one another in prayer—“Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

3. The Believers’ Spiritual Breakthrough: Pursuing Repentance and Growth Between Politics and Faith

Whether one is a believer in a “Three-Self” church or a house church, if there is to be any breakthrough in one’s personal spiritual life and fulfillment of the mission of Christ’s love, one key issue must be given special attention: repentance. Repentance is not only a core element of the Christian faith but also a crucial step in every Christian’s spiritual growth. In Chinese church communities, individuals aged 35 to 64 account for over 60% of the membership. Many of these are already settled in family and career, having experienced life’s ups and downs, with a deep understanding and reflection on life. As they age—especially when approaching later years—they increasingly need to reexamine their views on life and values, turn back to God, and pursue spiritual repentance and renewal. For example:

- **The Church Should Strengthen Repentance and Spiritual Guidance:** Whether in the “Three-Self” church or in house churches, more attention should be paid to teaching and practicing repentance. The church can help believers realize the importance of repentance through sermons, devotional courses, prayer meetings, and similar means—guiding them to find ways to live out their faith in a complex social environment. At this point, my heart feels heavy, because I see that—whether in house churches or “Three-Self” churches—a large proportion of pastors

focus their worship on expository sermons and the outpouring of grace, yet seem reluctant to put substantial effort into proclaiming, praying for, and teaching repentance for their brothers and sisters who need to be born again. It is not that exegetical teaching is unimportant or that grace should not be received with gratitude, but without repentance all these things are in vain. As a result, many brothers and sisters “believe in the Lord for a lifetime yet often live in a hellish torment.” Is worship a guarantee against living in hell? At this point, I suddenly understand why, following Jeremiah, the Bible also includes the book of Lamentations. It seems that through the prophet Jeremiah God expressed His boundless love for the Kingdom of Judah. The gradient of love is not merely a matter of presence versus absence; what is even colder than “nothing” is the slander born of a lack of understanding of true love. Transcending “love” means sacrifice—and I hope that more brothers and sisters will live out the freedom of faith.

- **Spiritual Reflection and Life Rebuilding for Middle-Aged Believers:** For the majority of middle-aged believers in the church, repentance is not only an inner reflection but also a process of rebuilding one’s life. The church should provide more platforms for these believers to share personal experiences and reflections, encouraging mutual fellowship and sharing of experiences of repentance and growth.

- **Living Out the Mission of Christ Within Real-World Constraints:** In the current political and social environment, whether in the “Three-Self” church or in house churches, believers should, on the basis of patriotism and compliance with laws, courageously pursue religious freedom. Believers can embody the love and care of Christ and demonstrate the real power of the faith by participating in social services, caring for neighbors, and supporting public welfare. Without such power, the so-called faith is ultimately like a nutritionally impoverished bottle of formula; if we do not return to the reborn state of “childlike” renewal—as Martin Luther emphasized, being justified by faith—then even such claims become futile. No more should we mock the notion that “China has walked in 40 years the path that took Western society 400 years, only to find the gap

still spans another 400 years.” From the time of Martin Luther’s Reformation, I believe that Chinese Christianity lags by at least 500 years—even without considering the additional years of stumbling due to its own distinctive features.

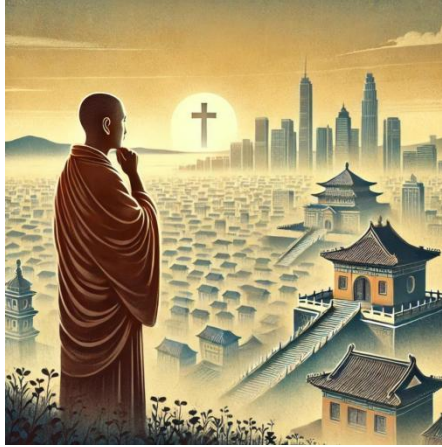
- **Repentance, Turning to God, and Becoming a Warm Current:** As disciples of Christ in this land, no matter where you worship, you should pray for this nation and be willing to repent sincerely before the Lord. The power of repentance will allow those who govern to see, in the form of fellow disciples, family members, and friends, the strength that comes from living out the Christian faith. This power, much like a small spark hidden within the tip of an iceberg, will gradually melt what appears to be a cold, indifferent heart. In time, these small streams will merge into a river of living water—just as the Yellow River and the Yangtze nourish the spiritually parched descendants of the Yan and Huang, fulfilling God’s cherished vision for this Eastern homeland.

Part III. Reflections from a Chinese Buddhist on Government–Church Reconciliation

I have a friend who is a long-practicing Buddhist and has been retired for many years. When I mentioned the situation of domestic churches to him, he shared the following thoughts based on his work and life experiences. I now present his perspective as the key explanatory section of today’s article—framed from his point of view.

As a Buddhist who grew up within a Chinese cultural context, after many years of practice and life he deeply appreciates the unique wisdom and healing power of Buddhism when it comes to mending human hearts. However, when faced with the various challenges of modern society, I gradually realized that Buddhism has certain limitations. The Christian core teachings—such as its spirit of universal love, ultimate care, and global empathy—deeply moved me, prompting me to wonder whether I might find a deeper spiritual nourishment in Christian faith. Yet when I delved deeper into the reality of Chinese churches, I discovered that there are many misunderstandings and contradictions between the government and the church. If these

problems are not resolved, they will not only affect the spread and development of Christianity in China but also hinder the realization of social harmony—after all, Buddhism’s influence in China has already permeated every aspect of daily life.



1. The Government’s and the Church’s Concerns: Their Own Confusions and Fears

Government’s Concerns

The government remains highly vigilant against any factors that might affect social stability. Christian churches—especially house churches, which are unregistered and lack fixed venues—are often seen as potential risk factors. The government fears that if the activities of these groups are left unchecked, they may trigger social instability or be exploited by foreign forces, thus endangering national security. With the rapid development of Christianity in China and the continuous increase in the number of believers, the government worries that the expansion of religion may affect the stability of the national ideological framework and challenge the dominant position of socialist core values. Under the current political system, the management of religious affairs reflects the strict control of social organizations. The government is concerned that if management over Christian churches is loosened, it will lose effective oversight over religious groups, which could then form independent and even oppositional forces within society.

Church’s Concerns

As a state-recognized, legal religious organization, the “Three-Self” church is often subject to numerous restrictions in

its doctrinal dissemination and faith practice, making it difficult for the church to maintain the purity of its faith and spiritual strength. For house churches, which are unregistered, the faith of both believers and evangelists varies widely. Their activities are often deemed illegal, subjecting believers to legal risks and external pressures, and severely restricting their religious freedom. The excessive “standardization” of the “Three-Self” church and its conformity to government policies have led many believers to worry that the church’s spiritual essence and faith purity are being undermined. Meanwhile, house churches fear that in the process of legalization, core beliefs may be compromised, and they might lose their original spiritual strength. Additionally, house church believers face legal and administrative penalties simply for participating in unregistered religious activities, which causes anxiety and fear. Moreover, the government’s strict restrictions on religious activities leave believers in “Three-Self” churches feeling that their religious lives are not adequately secured.

2. Breaking the Impasse: Establishing Trust and Cooperation Between the Government and the Church

My friend believes that in order to achieve reconciliation and cooperation between the government and the Christian church in the face of these concerns and confusions, both “sides” must break the current stalemate—a situation that ultimately should benefit both. The present impasse is that “the state” does not understand “the church” and thus manages it according to administrative methods, while “the church” does not incorporate the state into its actual prayer agendas, instead regarding it as an imagined enemy. In reality, both sides lack even the most basic communication and skills, resulting in mutual estrangement. He has proposed the following concrete suggestions for reference:

- (1) **Establish a Transparent Dialogue Mechanism:** The government and the Christian church should set up an open and transparent dialogue platform to regularly discuss issues of mutual concern. Through this communication mechanism, the government can listen more to the church’s demands and understand the needs and worries of religious groups, while the church, in turn, can express the genuine voices of

grassroots believers and work toward common ground and cooperation.

- (2) **Promote More Lenient and Flexible Religious Policies:** While ensuring national security and social stability, the government might consider further easing the oversight of both “Three-Self” churches and house churches by granting religious groups more autonomy and a greater sphere of religious freedom. This would not only reduce the resistance of religious groups toward the government but also effectively enhance the church’s social appeal and spiritual strength.
- (3) **Advance the Legalization Process for House Churches:** One reason people are reluctant to join house churches is the fear of punishment upon inspection. He suggests that the government gradually relax the registration requirements for house churches, simplify the registration process, and allow those willing to legalize to conduct religious activities within the framework of the law. This measure could reduce the instability caused by illegal activities, improve orderly management of religious activities by the government, and safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of believers.
- (4) **Encourage the Church to Actively Participate in Social Construction and Public Welfare:** The Christian church should, by engaging in social services, poverty alleviation, disaster relief, education, and cultural activities, demonstrate the social value of Christianity. The government, in turn, should provide opportunities and space for religious groups to participate in societal development. Through such cooperation, mutual trust can be built, allowing religious groups to play a greater role in promoting social harmony and progress.
- (5) **Promote the Localization and Sinicization of Christianity:** The church should deepen its understanding of traditional Chinese culture and social contexts, integrating Christian doctrine with Chinese cultural heritage, and explore modes of propagation that better suit the thinking and habits of the Chinese people. Through these localization efforts, Christianity can not only attract more local believers but also

help ease cultural conflicts and foster a deep integration of religious faith with society.

(6) Strengthen Religious Education and Internal Governance:

The church should enhance theological education and pastoral training to ensure doctrinal purity and spiritual strength. At the same time, the church must improve its internal governance and standardize its management practices to prevent the spread of extremist ideas and maintain a positive image and social credibility.

3. A Shared Vision for National Prosperity and Gospel Outreach

From his perspective, drawing on years of experience interacting with various sectors of society, my friend analyzes that government–church reconciliation and cooperation can not only alleviate social tensions but also provide vital support for long-term national stability and harmonious development. Through mutual understanding and joint effort, the following win-win outcomes may be achieved:

- (1) Improving Social Harmony and Moral Standards:** By working hand-in-hand, the government and the church can better promote overall social harmony and stability. Encouraging religious groups to engage in moral construction and public welfare activities enables both sides to contribute collectively to elevating the nation's moral level.
- (2) Promoting the Healthy Development and Orderly Management of Religion:** More tolerant and flexible religious policies from the government can create an improved developmental environment for religious groups, while the church's self-discipline and standardized management can reduce the government's oversight costs and foster the orderly and healthy development of religion.
- (3) Forming a Stable Force for National Prosperity:** Christianity in China has a large base of believers. If the church can forge a good cooperative relationship with the government, it will become an important force for national prosperity and social stability. Through joint efforts, the church can actively participate in nation-building and help believers cultivate a stronger sense of social responsibility and patriotism.

Finally, as a Buddhist, he believes that the future of Christianity in China holds enormous potential. In today's era of globalization and cultural pluralism, the encounter and integration of Christianity with Chinese culture is not merely an isolated religious phenomenon; it vividly reflects humanity's spiritual pursuits and cultural exchange. Through tolerant government policies and the church's own self-reflection and reform, Christianity can spread more widely in China and become a major force promoting social harmony and national prosperity. As more people embrace Christianity in accordance with national laws, the church will further contribute to the nation's stability and prosperity—and attract more individuals like him, who yearn for the depths of the Christian faith.

Conclusion: The Road to Spiritual Growth Unfolds in Repentance

Within China's unique social and political context, both “Three-Self” churches and house churches face their own challenges and limitations. Under the daily oversight of regulatory departments, “Three-Self” churches need to rethink how, while remaining true to a “Sinicized Christianity,” they can preserve their spiritual strength and autonomy. Meanwhile, house churches, operating in relatively freer environments, must wisely navigate external surveillance and pressures to find better ways for spiritual growth.

For Chinese Christians, regardless of the church structure they belong to, it is essential to transcend formal religious regulations and use the love of Christ to connect with one another as branches of the true vine. Repentance and turning back to God—especially for those middle-aged believers nearing old age—offer a vital opportunity to cast off the formidable “old self” before the Lord and rebuild one's spiritual life. By living out the mission of Christ in practical ways, believers can exemplify the pattern of Christ within China's unique context and contribute to social harmony and national prosperity.

Let us pray together for this cause—for repentance, for turning back to God, and for a new realization of the Four Modernizations: the modernization of faith and moral culture,

the modernization led by scientific and technological innovation, the modernization of ecological civilization and sustainable development, and the modernization of social governance and citizen participation. May we all contribute our strength to these endeavors.

Who Is Practicing Christ's Love for the Helpless You?

No matter whether you admit it or not, there are injustices—or what some might call sheer nonsense—on this land.

First, consider this question: Would you grieve for the suffering befalling a stranger? What would you do? And if one day you yourself became that suffering “stranger,” how would you wish other strangers to act toward you?

Although the following words are addressed to “Christians,” they are, in truth, meant for everyone. Perhaps the indifference of many “Christians” exceeds that of other strangers...

In the spiritual life of a Christian, both language and action are vital tools for expressing faith. We build our relationship with God through Bible reading, prayer, worship, and sharing our testimonies. Yet when confronted with societal injustice, it is even more necessary to have the courage to speak out. However, words alone are not enough, and merely contemplating injustice in one's mind will not suffice—a confirmation must come through concrete actions. Regrettably, many have forgotten this God-given gift of language and have opted instead to “watch and wait,” while the suffering of strangers passes like a fleeting meteor in their minds. I hope today's short text serves as a reminder to all brothers and sisters and encourages everyone to stand firmly for justice in this world.

1. The Gift of Language: A Comparison Between Humans and Animals

Language is a unique gift bestowed upon humanity by God. It is not only a means of communication but also a way to express thoughts, beliefs, and emotions. In times of crisis, animals instinctively warn or call out for help for themselves and their companions—a simple, direct act meant to protect and perpetuate life.

Yet, we humans—with our God-given ability to speak—often take this precious gift for granted. We choose silence, we wait and observe, and even when faced with social injustice, we remain mute. Can this silence be called “refined selfishness”? Perhaps it is a strategy of evasion and self-preservation. But take

note—when we choose not to speak out for justice, our society as a whole gradually loses its sense of safety and freedom. Every moment of silence weakens the overall spirit of justice in society.

2. Refined Selfishness: The Misuse of Language and the Cost of Silence

If we adopt an attitude of “it’s none of my business” and remain silent when our own interests are not directly affected, then as social justice and collective conscience are eroded, we ourselves will ultimately become the victims. By remaining silent in the face of injustice, we are effectively giving the green light for injustice to thrive. And if one day we find ourselves in a vulnerable position, needing someone to speak on our behalf, we might discover that no one is willing to stand up for us.

The poem “First They Came...” by the renowned German theologian and Lutheran pastor Martin Niemöller vividly illustrates this danger. (Below is a translation of the original German text, from its 1976 version):

When the Nazis came for the Communists, I remained silent; for I was not a Communist.

When they locked up the Social Democrats, I remained silent; for I was not a Social Democrat.

When they came for the trade unionists, I did not protest; for I was not a trade unionist.

When they came for the Jews, I remained silent; for I was not a Jew.

When they came for me, there was no one left to protest.

In everyday life, many people—even some Christians—choose to remain silent when faced with injustice, offering excuses such as “being too busy” or “worrying for personal safety.” In truth, this is an attempt to center on oneself and to “play it safe” amid complex social dynamics; behind such an attitude lies a deeper crisis.

When more and more people opt not to speak or act, injustice will spread, and society’s sense of justice and trust will gradually collapse. As Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” In such an

environment, everyone may eventually end up as a victim. Those who once chose silence will find that when they need help and support, there is nothing but quiet all around. What appears to be refined selfishness, protecting oneself, is in fact digging a grave for oneself.



3. Bravely Speaking Out: Upholding Justice Through Words

Language is our crucial instrument for expressing faith and defending justice. Jesus taught, “All you need to say is simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one” (Matthew 5:37). The Christian faith should not remain only in the heart but must be manifested in the words we speak and the positions we take. A vacillating attitude and indecisive behavior should never be characteristic of a disciple of Christ. On the contrary, we are called to be the voice of truth, to stand up for those who have no voice or whose voices are barely heard, and to speak out for social justice. Christians are called to advocate on behalf of orphans, widows, and the oppressed (James 1:27) and to speak up for those in distress (Proverbs 31:8–9). This is not only a moral imperative but also a practical expression and witness of the Christian faith. Throughout His ministry, Jesus cared deeply for society’s marginalized, bringing them hope and salvation. As His followers, we are to emulate His example.

For instance, in scripture it is written:

“Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.” (James 1:27, NIV)

“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.” (Proverbs 31:8–9, NIV)

In everyday life, we encounter numerous instances of injustice—for example, when the rights of the vulnerable are violated: marginalized poor families, women and children subjected to violence, and unfair treatment of colleagues in the workplace. Over the decades, the concept of “personal privacy” and “private property” has become muddled, allowing invasive behaviors that should be punished under the law to be hidden behind a mindset of commercialization. More and more incidents of infringement are ignored, and criminals escape legal punishment. We see ever more disappearances (covering up robbery, assault, murder, etc.), lenient sentences for suspects, and a general silence among the people—all of which feed the spread of wickedness and embolden further lawless behavior.

How can you, as a disciple of Christ, bear the thought of staying silent? I am grateful for those who use their voices on social media to defend justice. They risk much to challenge evil forces and fight for what is right. Each one of us, within our capabilities, can support these voices of justice—even if it is simply by liking, sharing, or commenting—to help spread these important messages further. Defending justice need not require “taking up arms”; our words and actions are sufficient for now.

4. Let Actions Speak: Becoming a Watchman for Society

Even though language plays an essential role in defending justice, it is ultimately our actions that best reflect our faith and values. As stated in James 2:17, “Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.” As Christians, our faith is not only evident in our words but must also be demonstrated by practical actions that embody our commitment to love and our defense of justice. We should not only say “love your neighbor as yourself” while turning a blind eye to the suffering of those in need.

We can initiate and participate in various acts of compassion within our churches—such as providing educational support to impoverished students, helping the elderly and vulnerable in our communities, and so on. These tangible actions, especially when taken by church leaders and fellow believers, can powerfully manifest our faith and help us shoulder our social responsibilities and missions. Influential believers in our country, in particular, should serve as ambassadors for justice. Without a solid foundation of “righteousness,” one’s “faith” is nothing more than a drift on water, and the “word” that is preached becomes mere empty rhetoric.

In our daily lives, industries that affect people’s livelihoods should also reflect and review their practices. For instance, workers in the medical and pharmaceutical sectors, food production and processing, as well as those in the agriculture and fresh produce markets, must no longer ignore “unwritten rules” or hide behind the excuse of “commercial interests” while continuing harmful practices that threaten the physical and mental well-being of innocent people. The emergence of figures such as Xin Jifei serves as a mirror exposing the dark deeds within these industries. When injustice threatens our physical health, should we not be compelled to stand up for justice and push for transparency and reform within these sectors?

Policy-makers concerned with issues affecting people’s livelihoods, as well as authorities charged with punishing unlawful behavior—especially urban management personnel—must, when confronted with food safety issues exposed by Xin Jifei, the singular commercialization of healthcare, or the presence of various unlawful additives, take unified, strict action.

No matter what your faith may be, you should become a guardian of society. This is our home, and we must not allow “external enemies” to harm it—nor should we permit “internal enemies” to do the same. The resources and energy used to produce anti-Japanese war TV dramas, even if only a fraction of that were applied to awarding bonuses to officials for tackling corruption, would have an immediate and tangible impact.

Conclusion:

Enough has been said above; in the concluding section, there is no need for further summary.

Let me mention a recent event: starting August 28, 2024, China announced the cessation of its international adoption program. Since the promulgation of the Adoption Law of the People's Republic of China on December 29, 1991, the United States alone has adopted 110,000 Chinese children—80% of whom were girls or children with disabilities. I will not go into further detail here; you can refer to the news for more information.

The issues discussed in this text are meant to convey that while our eyes remain fixed on the “enemy” outside, we must also look down to examine our own living environment. We should mindfully cultivate our souls and our homelands, transforming any “hatred” we may feel toward others into love for ourselves, our families, and even strangers. Only then will we come to understand the kind of love that, amid an education steeped in hatred, remains unforgettable—the love of Christ! This is the very foundation of all justice.

In time, we will gradually understand why some people choose to abandon disabled children while others opt to adopt them. Christian faith is not an optional extra; rather, it is the cornerstone for an individual, a family, a nation, and a people.

May every brother and sister live their life immersed in the love of Christ and, through their lives, manifest that love—becoming a blessing and hope to society.

Let us pray together for this cause!

A Friend's 'Act of Love' Experience

Yesterday, my friend Brother Wang told me that after reading one of my articles he recalled a recent “act of love” that happened right by his side—a full-blown online scam. He is also a Christian, and through this incident he came to appreciate even more the importance of steadfastly upholding one’s faith and principles in the online world. The following is a brief account of the story—from initially meeting someone who appeared to be a “United Nations peacekeeping soldier” to how he held firmly to his beliefs, rejected the temptations, and ultimately exposed the scam in its entirety.



(Image: AI-generated virtual character)

First Encounter: A United Nations Soldier on a Mission in Yemen

Earlier this month, Brother Wang was contacted on social media platform X by a woman claiming to be “Miss Tro” (who even had a Chinese name and claimed ancestral roots in Chengdu, China). She was extremely warm in her language, saying that she was “born and raised” in Los Angeles, was 34 years old, and served as an American soldier in the United Nations peacekeeping force in Yemen. She went on to explain that she was fighting alongside the U.S. Marine Corps against the Houthi forces—and she even told my friend that on certain nights during patrol there were firefights in which several soldiers had been injured or killed.

Miss Tro not only sent him several photos of herself—showing a young Asian-looking woman with a pleasing appearance and charm—but she also displayed pictures of herself in a U.S. military uniform. These images made her look both brave and trustworthy. Her personal profile was equally eye-catching: she professed a love for Chinese culture, especially spicy food like Chongqing hotpot; when she learned that my friend was a Christian, she also claimed to be a Christian. She said she enjoyed traveling, music, reading, hiking, and going to the beach, and that she was also adept at fishing and camping. Her words painted a picture of a life full of adventure and the pursuit of knowledge—an image that further enhanced her apparent credibility.



(Image: AI-generated virtual character)

Psychological Persuasion: The Orphanage Story That Evoked Sympathy

During their conversation, Miss Tro told the tragic story of her upbringing. She revealed that she had lost her parents in a car accident when she was eight years old and was raised in an orphanage as the only child. She also mentioned that by the end of September this year, after completing 20 years of service, she would be eligible for discharge and receive a pension. She expressed a strong desire to return to her homeland—to “return to her roots.” This detail deeply touched Brother Wang’s heart.

As a Christian, he felt deep compassion and believed that Miss Tro must have endured untold pain and loneliness.

At that moment, Brother Wang said that a strong wave of sympathy surged through him (I knew he was the soft-hearted type). He thought back to the faith teachings he had received—about caring for others, especially those who are vulnerable and alone. Confronted with Miss Tro’s story, he even felt the urge to lend a helping hand and become her spiritual support. It was precisely this act of compassion and empathy that made him develop an almost “heroic” urge to “protect the beauty” (i.e. to look out for her). This emotional state led him to remain relatively open to her subsequent requests—even though he did not completely drop his guard (after all, he is in his 50s and is well aware of his own limits).

The Scam Escalates: The “Retirement Pension” Calculation and Its Inducement

Soon after, Miss Tro informed Brother Wang that her unit had been invited by the Yemeni government to negotiate the current situation, but that while en route by helicopter they were ambushed by Houthi fighters—resulting in 6 deaths and 3 injuries. She claimed that she was one of the injured; a poisonous bullet had hit her lower leg—but “fortunately” it did not hit any bone, and she needed surgery that very night.

She then shifted the conversation to her “financial issues” and began to explain in detail her situation regarding her “retirement pension.” She said that since she was about to retire and, combined with her injury, the United Nations had immediately issued discharge documents and awarded her and her comrades 20 years’ worth of pension and compensation, totaling 2.4 million U.S. dollars. She explained that the UN stored \$10,000 per month as a pension, amounting to \$120,000 annually, and over 20 years that summed up to exactly 2.4 million dollars. Brother Wang later told me, “Then they called each of us and gave us our retirement document and also a box of money.”

Miss Tro’s description was very detailed, which led Brother Wang to believe, at least for a time, that her account might be genuine. She further explained that because she had spent years on duty in Yemen, her personal bank account had been frozen

due to long inactivity, and that she was therefore unable to directly handle the money. At that point, she proposed that Brother Wang keep the money for her until her leg healed and she could move to China to retrieve it. His recollection of his own words was:

“From the moment my retirement documents and compensation/ pension were handed to me on my wheelchair, the question of who would keep it crossed my mind. I felt no fear or doubt. I believed it would be safe with you and that there wouldn’t be any problem – all you need to do is receive the money and safeguard it until my leg heals and I can come to China. I don’t know if you will have the courage to help me, but I would be grateful if you could support me and keep it for me.”

Miss Tro’s request appeared reasonable and underpinned by emotion. She claimed that she trusted Brother Wang completely and emphasized that their “special friendship” assured her that the money would be kept safely in his hands. She cleverly played on the Chinese trait of hospitality and willingness to help friends, repeatedly mentioning the pleasant future prospect of meeting in China, in order to evoke a positive response from him.

A Test of Faith and Principles: Rejecting the Temptation and Upholding Reason

Faced with the sudden monetary temptation, Brother Wang’s resolve wavered momentarily. Although the trust he had in Miss Tro had been established—based on her story and photos—as a Christian, he always heard an inner voice reminding him not to be blinded by external temptations. The core of his faith is the steadfast adherence to truth and integrity rather than sacrificing moral principles for short-term gain. Thus, Brother Wang decided not to allow himself to be caught up in what could be potential trouble and politely declined her request.

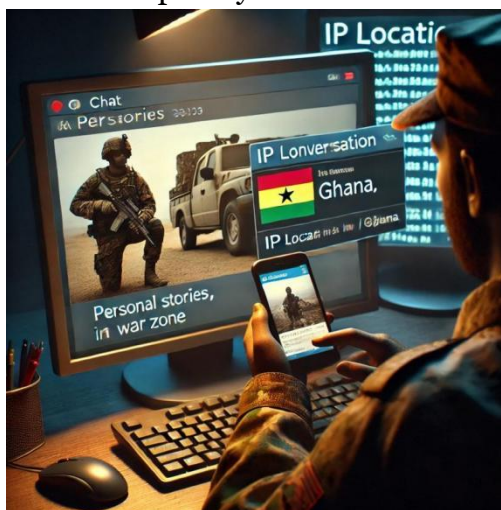
This was not the first time Brother Wang had resisted Miss Tro’s temptations. In previous conversations, Miss Tro had hinted at her desire for a closer relationship. Though Brother Wang felt the tug of emotion, he remained loyal to his family and his faith, undeterred by physical beauty or allure. This time, confronted with the test of money, he maintained clarity and composure.

Exposing the Scam: Tracing the IP Address and Discrediting the Scheme

Brother Wang said his curiosity was first piqued by wondering just how heavy a “box of money” might be. Being nearly 60 and having never seen so much cash—U.S. dollars no less—he looked it up online. He found that one million dollars in new hundred-dollar bills would weigh roughly 10 kilograms, so 2.4 million would weigh about 24 kilograms, not counting the weight of the box. Even a very strong man would find that heavy to carry. How could a female soldier possibly carry such a heavy box into China?

Subsequently, his suspicions began to mount, and he decided to investigate further. He checked the IP address from which Miss Tro had accessed his blog, and the location showed up as the Republic of Ghana—not Yemen as she had claimed. He then examined the telephone number registered with her chatting account, which turned out to be 233-****62719. The “233” is, in fact, the international dialing code for Ghana. This discovery made Brother Wang even more certain that everything about Miss Tro was fabricated.

He immediately confronted her with direct questions regarding the IP address. At first, Miss Tro attempted to deflect with emotional appeals, but as Brother Wang persisted in seeking more evidence and explanations, she gradually lost her patience. Ultimately, she went completely offline and never replied again.



(Image: AI-generated virtual character)

Conclusion: The Importance of Steadfast Faith and Sound Judgment

This experience was not only a lesson in identifying online scams but also a true test of Brother Wang’s faith and principles. In the face of the temptations of beauty and money, he steadfastly maintained his Christian convictions—without betraying his family or succumbing to greed. His firm belief and upright character are something I, and everyone else, can learn from and admire.

I have written up this story with Brother Wang’s permission so that more people can be made aware of it. I believe that if it were me, it would have been much harder to remain as “rational” as he did. Brother Wang mentioned that many details indicated that Miss Tro had prepared very thoroughly—she had taken photos showing her with a breakfast plate, selfies before heading out on patrol, videos recorded during patrol, and even shots of her bleeding leg in a hospital after being injured... These details, he said, were designed to increase her credibility.

I simply want to say that when interacting with strangers online, although compassion is indispensable, maintaining prudence and vigilance is even more important. Even in the face of the most enticing promises and the most touching stories, one must always remember one’s own faith and principles. The essence remains unchanged—one’s own home is the most trustworthy foundation. Only then can we make sound judgments and prevent ourselves from falling into scams that may bring harm to our families.

Many thanks to Brother Wang for sharing his “act of love” story. Let us pray together for this cause!

Attachment:

“*The Romantic*” is the theme song of the TV series “*Too Late to Say I Love You*.” Below are the AI-edited lyrics. They serve as a reminder to our brothers and sisters that when engaging with strangers on online platforms, one should not become overly amorous or imprudent. (Due to copyright issues, the original version is not provided here. The lyrics are offered free for anyone to adapt or perform. I look forward to talented friends creating their own accompaniment videos.)

[Lyrics – “Faith is Like Fire”]

Faith is like fire Amid the temptations of the online world When we first meet, when we encounter She was on a mission in Yemen Her photos showed genuine emotion and bravery Her appearance looked undeniably sincere

A story of orphanage tears moved me deeply Yet behind it all lay a hidden scam As my faith began to build, I wanted to believe She said she longed to return home, her roots calling Her steadfast look and sincere words Touched my heart I felt compelled to lend a hand, honestly With Christian teachings in my heart, emotions surged Lost in her story

Faith is like fire Amid the temptations of the online world When we first meet, when we encounter She was on a mission in Yemen Her photos showed genuine emotion and bravery Her appearance looked undeniably sincere Tears from the orphanage story moved me deeply, A hidden scam soon unfurled As money began to pile up, she spoke That her bank account was frozen And asked me to help by depositing some funds I began to feel suspicion Faith reminded me to be cautious Not to be led astray by the lure of money And so I refused, guarding my heart and my faith

Truth emerged as I investigated further I checked her IP address—it pointed to Ghana I questioned her, but she could not explain In the end, she disappeared Faith was the light that guided me Through the deceit and temptation In the midst of beauty and money, deception was exposed Faith remains clear and steady Faith is like fire Amid the online world’s temptations When we first meet, when we encounter She was on a mission in Yemen Her photos showed genuine emotion and bravery Her appearance looked undeniably sincere A story of orphanage tears moved me deeply But behind it all lay a hidden scam Even facing the most alluring promises, I kept my guard, with faith firmly in my heart The truth now shows the way, No longer falling into deceit Family and faith can be safeguarded No matter how moving the story, Caution must prevail May faith protect us all our lives.

Reflections on the Reasons Behind Inconsistent Faith Between Spouses

There is a question: Why is it that in some families one spouse is a committed Christian while the other either never believes or follows another religion—such as Buddhism or Taoism—or only grudgingly comes to share a common faith after many years of living together? And when it comes to children, a unified faith is even harder to achieve. In many cases, children simply follow their parents blindly in childhood—attending Bible readings, worship services, and so forth—but as they grow up it becomes difficult for them to continue in the same way. In China, such inconsistencies in religious belief are not uncommon, and often the believing party is the woman. The underlying causes are complex and varied. This article will analyze the issue from several aspects, with the aim of raising questions. It is offered in the sincere hope that brothers and sisters will reflect on their own situations together with their families. The key points are listed below:

Reasons for Inconsistent Faith Between Spouses

1. Lack of Deep Spiritual Insight: An Absence of a Communication Foundation

– First, many times the believing spouse has not studied or accumulated enough biblical knowledge. When trying to discuss matters of faith with their partner, they stumble through their words and lack the persuasive power needed to answer questions. This often leaves the non-believing spouse with a poor impression. Even in families where one partner is a pastor or a church coworker, even if that spouse can explain the truth clearly, it is rarely an overnight achievement; in the eyes of the other, they still appear as a “novice.” Under these circumstances, the unbelieving partner is easily led to misunderstand the nature of faith or to form prejudices—viewing faith simply as a collection of religious ceremonies or dogmatic rituals rather than a transformative relationship with Christ.

– Secondly—and perhaps most importantly—the believing spouse may live their entire life under strict religious rules and

regulations rather than under the liberating guidance of a vibrant Christian faith. This situation is true not only for many lay believers but also for some church coworkers. In short, to summarize in one scripture: “For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love serve one another. For the entire law is fulfilled in the word, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” (Galatians 5:13–14, CUV) Without the freedom and joy that come from a true personal faith, the power and influence of that faith cannot be appreciated. In the eyes of the unbelieving partner, the believer is merely someone holding different religious views, and they cannot sense the transformative power of a living faith.



2. The Practice of Faith in Daily Life: Preaching at Home or Practicing “Unity” in the Family?

Faith is the inner driving force of life. If the believing spouse does not manifest Christ’s love, humility, and open-heartedness in their everyday goals, methods, and lifestyle, they will not stand as a role model in the eyes of their partner—or even less so for their children. Moreover, within the family the behavior of every member is observed under a proverbial magnifying glass; actions that would otherwise exemplify the image of Christ are often obscured by the lack of privacy or by casual, unconstrained behavior. This is one reason why it is so difficult for family members to truly “display” the character of Christ in their daily lives.

In many families, the non-believing partner easily dismisses or undermines the manifestations of faith they observe. However, such observations tend to be very one-sided. One must remember that the family is meant to be a sanctuary of love and tolerance—a place where the hurts, labors, and hardships one endures outside can be healed and comforted. The home is not necessarily a formal pulpit for preaching; rather, it is a place where husband, wife, and even children can encourage one another with love and acceptance, not a venue for any one person to showcase their personality, temperament, or personal heroism.

Strictly speaking, the family is meant to be a training ground for “body, mind, and spirit” unity. Foremost is the orientation of one’s spirit; next comes one’s thoughts and attitudes. In the family, every member’s words and actions reflect not just the individual but the entire family. If, after marriage, a person remains selfishly centered on themselves, acting as a “lone hero” or a “prodigal,” they may seem wise and strong on the surface but will ultimately become isolated and unsupported. In other words, if one pursues endeavors without the backing of a family committed to unity, their so-called “courage” is merely bluster—and their vanity and weakness are easily exploited by those with ulterior motives. In the end, a family in which the “body, mind, and spirit” are separated becomes the breeding ground for sin. When differences of thought—the “heart” of each person—are not addressed in a reasonable way, these divisions gradually provide opportunities for individuals to assert their personal opinions. Sin can then spread boldly through the home, and Satan, in effect, takes possession of that family.

3. The Reluctance to Embrace Faith Stems from One’s “Inexpressible Shame”: Sin! What Sin? Oh, Better Not Mention It!

Next, let us address a deeper cause. When there is no genuine aspiration for “body, mind, and spirit” unity between spouses, the non-believing partner—and even if that partner follows another religion but is unwilling to reveal their “sin” and the process of repentance or to communicate openly about

differences—this reluctance is a form of an unspoken secret, a “shameful sin” as described in Scripture.

Although the specifics vary greatly with each person’s experience, at its core it is the inability or unwillingness to stand before Christ and confess one’s sins. This might include issues such as pride, greed for beauty, coveting public assets, indulgence in alcohol and revelry, or maintaining ambiguous relationships with members of the opposite sex. It could also be the petty disputes over household minutiae that eventually lead one to feel scorn or jealousy—for instance, perceiving injustice in the way the other treats the children—or lingering emotional wounds that one cannot let go. These unspeakable thoughts and attitudes are often conveniently excused by statements such as “I only trust myself,” “I believe in Buddha,” or “I am practicing Tao,” effectively placing both partners in opposition. Do the non-believing spouses truly not understand the sincere, earnest expressions of faith of their believing partners? Not at all—the obstruction is mainly the fear of having one’s own sins exposed, the unwillingness to relinquish the temporary “pleasure in sin” or the emotional quagmire it brings, and frequently even a cold war that prevents mutual acceptance of the other’s faith.

It is important to note that traditional doctrines in Christianity (both Protestant and Catholic) as well as Islam provide detailed explanations of original sin and the inherent evil in human nature combined with later sinful desires. These religions emphasize that because of our innate sinful condition, we need faith, repentance, and reliance on God’s grace for redemption and purification. In contrast, Buddhism and Taoism, strictly speaking, are not theistic in the same way—they focus more on individual self-cultivation and the removal of evil thoughts in order to eventually attain sanctity or enlightenment.



4. A Lack of Genuine Love and Spiritual Attraction: What Exactly Do You Love About Your Partner?

In families where one partner is a Christian and the other is either non-believing, partially believing, or adheres to another religion, I believe that communication between the spouses is often neither sufficient nor candid. There is a lack of deep dialogue regarding each other's values and life philosophies, and a shortage of skills in resolving differences. As a result, the very needs of the soul remain unaddressed.

Many times, the non-believing partner seems not to love the believing spouse wholeheartedly. This is not meant as a judgment, but rather an observation. In other words, when spouses are merely coexisting for the sake of daily life without caring about each other's emotional highs and lows, it is difficult to foster a shared pursuit of joyful living. Indeed, today's couples—as well as families with children—are often so preoccupied with coping with day-to-day matters that they have little energy left to discuss the deeper needs of the soul. Over days and months, this can sap the desire for deep, meaningful exchange, and gradually lower the level at which the partners communicate.

Many are unwilling to admit this, thinking that merely “living together in harmony” is sufficient. But consider this: When you first fell in love and formed a family, you were willing to give everything out of love. And now, if one partner has been chosen by Christ, shouldn't that be a sign intended to bring even more

harmony to the family? If your union were based on spiritual attraction rather than just physical appeal or a compromise of ideas, how could you bear to limit your relationship to merely material or bodily needs?

Many couples have never even attempted to experience the kind of “body–mind–spirit” unity in their marital relationship, nor have they imagined how effortless and joyful a life of spiritual unity can be.

Without the guidance of the Holy Spirit leading both of you, how can your innermost thoughts and desires truly be shared? It is like one partner living on Mars and the other on Venus—they orbit the same sun yet remain on different paths. Each may believe they are outstanding, but no matter how hard one tries, true “united effort” is unattainable. The most obvious example is the upbringing of children. When children face two parents—each set on high ground with seemingly ample reasons for their stance—what basis do they have in making their own choices? As a result, once their independent thinking kicks in, the first thing they do is rebel in the way they understand.

5. The Inheritance of “Sin” from Both Families: Upholding Everything Is to Complicit in the Family’s Sin

Another reason for the divergence in faith between spouses stems from the “sin” that is passed down from each family—mostly from the influence of both sets of parents. Many of the personal traits and habits of spouses are imbued with the customs and practices of their families, carrying with them inherited “seeds of sin.” These attitudes are unconsciously instilled in their children—effectively a gene-transfer project of sin.

Consider the state of each partner’s “body, mind, and spirit” and behavioral style: Isn’t it simply a replica of the previous generation? Can the non-believing spouse even recognize that this issue is a critical step for the believing partner’s choice by Christ? Observe this: although the believing partner may not be “perfect,” compared to their parents’ generation there has often been a positive transformation. Imagine if both spouses were living under Christ’s leadership. Wouldn’t the unified atmosphere of the family serve as a better example for their

children? In this light, you and your spouse now become the model for your children's future reflections on faith.

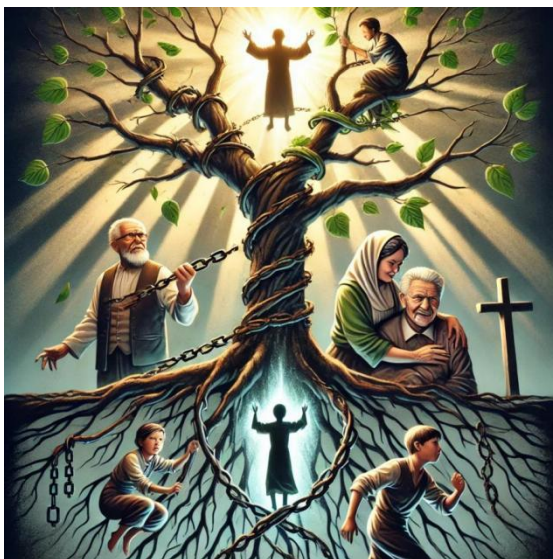
As the old saying goes, "A child is known by the age of three; by seven, you can tell what kind of person they will be." If you miss out on the period of early faith education, by the time your children turn 18 or graduate from high school they may go off to college far from home. How many years will you have left to lead them by example? In the process of growing up, children often come to understand and identify with faith by observing their parents. As God's heirs, they are perfectly capable of making their own choices about whether to follow the faith of their parents.

For example, when my own parents were young, my mother had a rather irritable temper and had not received the gospel. Of the two brothers, I inherited my mother's short temper while my younger brother remained quiet. Growing up without proper guidance in that regard, I not only learned to be impatient but also adopted a host of negative traits such as preemptive anxiety and post-event regret—and eventually, I literally "inherited" my mother's high blood pressure. I am grateful that near her retirement, my mother was chosen by the Lord; after her persistent exhortations, my brother and I gradually accepted the gospel ourselves.

Every person has flaws, but true faith can offer a new beginning for an individual, a family, and even a nation—it is the real starting line. When a person's spirit is led by Christ, there is no need to fear losing the "starting line" that others have set up artificially.

How fortunate it is when one spouse comes to faith in Christ! As it is written, "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy." (1 Corinthians 7:14, CUV) This does not mean, however, that the other partner may indefinitely delay being "chosen." Your unbelief becomes a heavy burden on the other, a shackle that prevents your family from rising. Therefore, brothers and sisters, do not limit your attention solely to material needs and personal desires. Lean on Christ instead.

If you are willing to jointly pursue spiritual unity for the sake of optimizing your family's spiritual DNA, your family will gradually prosper under the guidance of Christ—and the inherited element of sin in your family will be slowly cleansed by His love.



6. Lack of a Unified “Principle” in the Standards for Both Sides’ Friendships

There is a Chinese saying: “The more friends you have, the more paths there are.” The underlying assumption is one of mutual benefit—that one gains from one’s friends. But aren’t these additional friends often far more diverse than you might imagine? As mentioned earlier, when spouses lack unity in their “body, mind, and spirit,” it is inevitable that each will encounter various so-called “friends” in their social interactions. The selection of these “friends” should be a matter of discussion between both partners. Do not allow selfish interests or a desire for pleasure to lead you into relationships that damage the harmony of the family. Honest communication between spouses is the basic safeguard against friendships that may harm the family.

Seeking Solutions for Family Unity

When faced with the situation of having inconsistent faith within the family, there are still ways for family members to act. Whether one partner’s faith is steadfast while the other is doubtful or non-believing, the family can still strive toward unity

on the foundation of love and understanding. The following are some practical suggestions to help family members better accept and understand one another's differences in belief and move toward a closer relationship. My own experience is extremely limited, so the suggestions below are meant to encourage every family to reflect on these issues and, as early as possible, become a "unified" family chosen by Christ.

1. Deepen Mutual Understanding and Respect

Must family members really worry about saving face with one another? Regardless of whether one believes or does not, the foundation of the family is love. Even if the faiths differ, could the love between you unite you? Even if it is impossible to completely harmonize your faiths in the short term, the family should begin with the original intention of love—by focusing on the common growth of the family and the education of the children, thereby finding a path to unity. The believing partner can strive to grasp the true essence of the Christian faith rather than merely displaying a "paper faith" through academic discussion. They should showcase the joy and tolerance that comes with being guided by Christ in their family and daily life. Meanwhile, the non-believing partner might try to understand the meaning of faith from the perspective of family unity, actively exploring ways to find common ground amid diverse beliefs until a consensus is reached. Additionally, both can work together to address any lingering "sins" or problems inherited from past family conflicts, thereby creating a more harmonious, positive family environment.



2. Build a Shared Atmosphere for Spiritual Life and Pursue a Unified “Body, Mind, and Spirit”

The unity of faith within a family can be realized through shared spiritual practices and experiences. Spouses can participate together in family meetings, read the Bible or other related books, and even set aside time to discuss values, life goals, and pressing societal issues. By jointly exploring and seeking solutions to differences, these conversations can become a regular part of your communication. An important point: the non-believing partner is especially encouraged to lay aside their mental burdens and hesitations, and boldly speak about their understanding of sin and their struggles. This includes sharing each other’s differing views on certain issues and clarifying their circles of friends. The willingness to dispel “secrets” between one another is a vital step toward spiritual unity. The sins that are exposed should be discarded as stumbling blocks in the family, and the fleeting “pleasures in sin” are merely the opium of the devil. With mutual effort and sincere communication, you not only enhance understanding and respect but also increase the cohesion of the family. Marriage is not only a union of lifestyles; it is a union of families. In a household where Christ reigns, marriage serves firstly as a “cleanser” for the sins of both individuals and families, and secondly as a union of both souls.



3. Face the Truth Within: Let Go of Self and Seek a Higher Realm

Whether you currently believe or not, try to set aside your preconceptions and see whether Jesus' teachings can bring inner peace and family harmony. Many people, when they finally lay bare their "secrets," experience not the pain they expected but an unprecedented lightness and joy. In doing so, you gain not only your partner's trust and become a role model for your children, but also enjoy the happiness that comes with a unified family, as well as the courage and strength to face life and work. Over time, the inherited "sins" within your family will slowly transform into a driving force for family joy through the process of coming together. The transmission of a shared faith will provide your children with a strong foundation against the various unknown forces they face in life. Your family will serve as the vanguard for both families to break free from the bondage of sin, and your peace and happiness will serve as a guiding light for future generations.

Conclusion

Differences in faith can either be a stumbling block to family growth or a springboard for the shared spiritual maturation of all involved. We encourage every family whose members do not share the same faith, as well as every new family formed by brothers and sisters who have grown up, to put aside pride and

preconceptions, open their hearts to one another, and walk together toward a more promising future.

In the eyes of the older generation, you are their children; in the eyes of the next generation, you are their original family; and for your siblings, you are a branch of the family. At every stage, only in Christ can each family truly achieve the goals of harmony and happiness, walking the path of abundant spirituality and love.

We all know that issues involving family faith touch on many topics—including cultural and social backgrounds, religious differences, child education, the relationship between faith and mental health, and respecting the diversity of beliefs. In the future, when conditions allow, these will be discussed further.

Let us pray together for this cause!

Is the Pursuit of Perfection the Goal of Repentance?

In our daily lives many sins do not appear suddenly but are closely linked to our deep inner desire to be “perfect.” We often wish for ourselves, others, and every aspect of life to achieve some ideal state of perfection. Ironically, this pursuit eventually becomes the cause of sin, binding us in chains of pain. The key to repentance is to accept the reality that we are not perfect, to learn to let go of our obsession with perfection, and to rely on God’s grace to walk toward a life of freedom and joy.

I. The Relationship Between 12 Common Sins in the Christian Life and the Pursuit of Perfection

1. **Pride** Pride arises at the moment we strive to be “the most perfect.” When we believe that we are superior to others, we unconsciously elevate ourselves and look down on others, thinking we are all-powerful and do not need God’s help. In truth, pride is a refusal to accept our own imperfection—it is an attempt to hide our shortcomings behind a façade of “perfection.”
2. **Greed** Greed stems from an endless pursuit of a perfect life. We desire more wealth, a higher status, or greater material resources, mistakenly believing that these will make our lives more perfect and happy. Yet this desire can never be satisfied, as it always leaves us feeling incomplete.
3. **Lust** Lust often originates from the misguided pursuit of a perfect relationship or the fulfillment of bodily desires. People hope to fill an inner emptiness through physical pleasure, chasing a “perfect satisfaction” that is ultimately fleeting and only deepens our void and fragmentation.
4. **Envy** Envy occurs when we see others possessing what we deem “perfect” and feel pain because we cannot accept our own imperfections. We become consumed with wanting what others have, believing that they are better or happier than us.
5. **Wrath** Wrath frequently arises from our inability to tolerate the imperfections in our lives or in others. When people do not live up to our expectations or events do not unfold as we wish, we react with anger—believing that everything should work according to our standards.

6. **Sloth** Sloth is born of our fear of confronting our imperfect selves. We are afraid to fail or to do anything less than perfect, so we choose to avoid responsibility and refrain from trying. Behind sloth lies, in essence, a fear of failure.

7. **Gluttony** Gluttony is another manifestation of the pursuit of perfection. We overindulge in food and drink to seek emotional satisfaction, trying to fill the emptiness in our lives with excess, mistakenly thinking that such behavior will make our lives fuller and more perfect.

8. **Lying and Deception** Lying and deception are used to maintain the “perfect image” we present to others. We do not want others to see the real us; we are afraid of exposing our faults and mistakes. Instead, we choose falsehoods to cover up our imperfection.

9. **Theft** Theft occurs when someone seeks to obtain, by dishonest means, a part of the perfect life they imagine. They believe that stealing others’ wealth, accomplishments, or resources will fill their own deficiencies and lead to a “more perfect” life.

10. **Idolatry** Idolatry is the perfect fantasy we create about external things—money, status, power, or anything else we cannot let go of. We mistakenly believe that these objects can provide security and satisfaction, but in truth, we allow these idols to replace God’s rightful place in our lives.

11. **Unforgiveness** Unforgiveness arises because we demand perfection from others. When hurt by others, we cannot accept their imperfection and deem them unworthy of our forgiveness. In reality, an unwillingness to forgive imprisons us in bitterness.

12. **Blasphemy** Blasphemy is often rooted in a dissatisfaction with God. We may be discontented with our current circumstances, believing that God has not acted in the “perfect” way we expected. In our hearts or words, we then show contempt for God’s authority and actions.



II. Repentance: Stepping Out from the Lie of Perfectionism

The sins listed above are often underpinned by a common attitude—the relentless pursuit of perfection. We not only strive for our own perfection but also expect others and every aspect of life to meet our high standards. This pursuit traps us in a “Tower of Babel” of thought, as we try to take God’s place by accumulating more, by having better or more successful things to prove our worth. Yet the pursuit of perfection is a colossal lie. It leads us into pride, greed, envy, and other sins, and prevents us from accepting our and others’ imperfections, ultimately resulting in pain and oppression.

The key to repentance is to recognize that the pursuit of perfection is a lie. We cannot achieve perfection on our own, and life will not always unfold according to our expectations. True freedom and joy lie in embracing our imperfection and relying on God’s grace every single day. The following process of repentance may help us break free from the bondage of sin:

1. **Acknowledge Your Imperfection and Weakness:** The first step in repentance is to let go of the fixation on perfection and to admit that you cannot become perfect through your own efforts. It is like standing before a mirror, facing your flaws and shortcomings. Instead of trying to hide them, you acknowledge the truth: “I am indeed imperfect, and I need not be perfect.” Remember that God’s purpose in creating us was not for us to

match Him, but for us to live our authentic lives by relying on His grace.

2. **Accept God's Love and Grace:** Once you recognize your imperfection, the next step is not to blame yourself or try to make up for it through human effort, but to accept the grace that God has already provided. God's love is not contingent upon our perfect performance; it is given because we are His children. This grace is like discovering that even when lost, God has been guiding you all along—pointing you back home. He accepts our weaknesses and is willing to help us stand up again.

3. **Rely on the Holy Spirit to Gradually Change You:** Repentance does not mean that one instantly becomes “flawless” but that you choose each day to no longer rely on yourself, but rather allow the power of the Holy Spirit to lead you toward a better version of yourself. Every time you face old sinful habits or temptations, repentance means choosing to let the Spirit help you overcome them.

4. **Live Out Genuine Freedom and Joy:** When you stop chasing perfection and instead accept your true, imperfect self, you will discover true freedom. You will no longer be crushed by excessive expectations, nor will you be overwhelmed by anger or envy when others fall short of your standards. You can embrace each day with a peaceful heart, enjoy the blessings God has given, and live out true joy. With the heavy burden lifted from your shoulders, you can stroll freely, appreciate the beauty around you, and truly enjoy the magnificent life that God has provided.



III. Conclusion

The true meaning of repentance lies in breaking free from the lie of perfectionism and accepting your own imperfection—whether it is the current state of affairs, a loveless childhood, or any other shortcoming. When we are willing to let go of ourselves and rely on God’s grace, we gradually break free from the bonds of sin and experience the freedom and joy that come from trusting in God. We learn to reexamine every moment of our lives, and we also gain a deeper understanding of our parents’ imperfections, thereby accepting the flaws in our family members and children. In doing so, we come to understand that every person is an experience and a vessel of God’s glory.

Repentance is not merely an action—it is an ongoing spiritual journey that leads us toward a more abundant, fulfilling state of life, one free of worry, anxiety, and depression.

Let us pray together for this cause!

‘Anti-Japanese Plus,’ ‘Anti-Corrupt and Exploitative Merchants,’ or ‘I Love My Enemies’?

Reading Foundation for This Article: *In China, patriotism has long been closely linked to the memory of the war of resistance against Japan. However, at the Party’s three major congresses, the principal domestic contradictions were redefined as follows: at the Eighth National Congress in 1956, the contradiction between the people’s aspiration to build an advanced industrial nation and the reality of a backward agricultural country; at the Sixth Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee in 1981, the contradiction between the people’s ever-growing material and cultural needs and lagging social productivity; and at the 19th National Congress in 2017, the contradiction between the people’s ever-growing desire for a better life and unbalanced and insufficient development. These discussions have from the state level ended the era when the primary contradiction during the Anti-Japanese War was defined as the Chinese-Japanese contradiction. On September 29, 1972, the People’s Republic of China and the Japanese government issued a joint statement that led to the normalization of diplomatic relations.*

Today’s China has entered a brand-new era, facing not only global competition but also many internal issues. We must not only remember history and reflect on the wounds of past wars but, more importantly, decide which urgent course of action we should pursue in our complex society today. Should we continue to emphasize anti-Japanese sentiment as the primary contradiction—the so-called “Anti-Japanese Plus” (here referring to the condition in which, after the war has ended and the physical battle is over, the soul continues its fight)—or should we carefully interpret current major contradictions and address problems in every field (that is, “fighting against corrupt officials and exploitative merchants”)? Thirdly, as Christians we need to ponder whether hatred can break the “Anti-Japanese Plus” mindset. This issue concerns how every citizen lives a healthy and joyful life. Some reflections and supporting reference materials follow for your further study.

1. Anti-Japanese Plus – The Continuation of Patriotic Sentiment

Anti-Japanese resistance is an important chapter in Chinese history. It symbolizes the indomitable spirit of the Chinese nation in the face of external aggression. However, today's China is entirely different from those earlier times; at various stages in history, the Chinese Communist Party has shifted its main focus to issues that affect people's livelihood. While history should not be forgotten, immersing oneself exclusively in hatred toward Japan and past emotional grievances may cause us to overlook the urgent issues of the present. During World War II many Southeast Asian countries—most notably the Philippines—suffered brutal invasions and plunder by the Japanese, yet these nations have focused on raising living standards and bolstering national strength. Overemphasis on historical hatred can, at times, become a burden that hinders progress.

Patriotism is not merely a nostalgic remembrance of the past; it is also a responsibility for today's life. While the patriotic sentiments of the war against Japan are important, true patriotism in practical terms should begin with loving oneself and one's fellow citizens, taking personal responsibility for one's life and societal role, and producing fruitful work for one's compatriots. It is not about desecrating the legacy of the revolutionary heroes who won the nation's freedom by sacrificing their lives—by poisoning the food or milk powder, hiked prices of life-saving medicines, trafficking in children and organs, or even exploiting the dead. If a society concentrates solely on external enemies while ignoring its internal problems, then its progress will be severely hindered.



2. Fighting Against Corrupt and Exploitative Merchants – Confronting Today’s Social Challenges

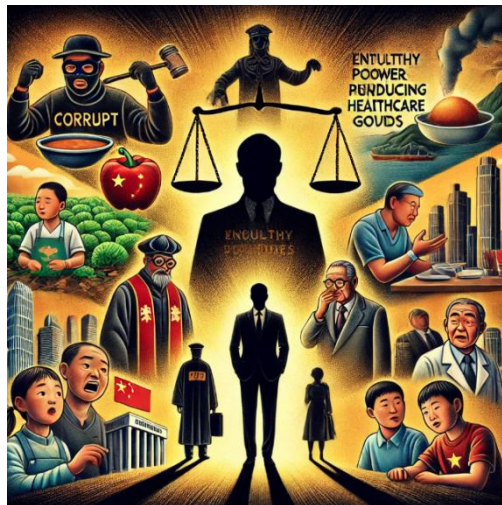
In examining modern China, in addition to historical wounds, one must also consider the challenges posed by corruption among law enforcers, officials’ dereliction of duty or abuse of power, as well as widespread violations and the lax enforcement across various industries. In today’s society, “corrupt officials and exploitative merchants” are not limited only to those publicly identified in criminal cases—they also include those in different sectors whose illegal or unethical practices harm people’s interests, effectively becoming modern embodiments of corruption and exploitation.

- **Law Enforcers’ Inaction and Misconduct:** Law enforcement is supposed to be the cornerstone of social justice. Yet some officials abuse their power and harm the people’s interests—even masking problems by flaunting their “special” status. Such behavior seriously erodes public trust in both the law and governmental personnel.
- **Producers and Sellers of Toxic and Harmful Food Products:** In the realm of food safety, more and more enterprises, in their short-sighted pursuit of profit, are neglecting public health by manufacturing and processing dangerous foods—from milk powder and beverages to vegetables and grains. Increasingly, people are suffering health problems as a result.
- **The Commercialization and Disorder in the Healthcare System:** Commercial pressures have turned certain hospitals and medical personnel into profit-driven entities, treating patients as

mere revenue sources. The decision-makers behind these forces have exacerbated the inequitable distribution of medical resources, damaging countless families.

- **The Education System Brainwashed by Interest Groups:** In some cases, educators fail to teach students independent, critical, and logical thinking. Instead, they are directed by interest groups, neglecting the freedom and fairness that education should embody. This stifles children's creativity and independent personalities.

These corrupt figures can be found in every corner of society, and their presence erodes social trust and impedes genuine progress. Thus, combating corrupt officials and exploitative merchants is not a historical duty but a real challenge that every one of us must face today. Only by confronting such corruption and breaking the cycles of injustice can our society truly move forward.



3. “I Love My Enemies” – Living Out the Freedom of the Christian Faith

Jesus taught us to love our enemies; this is not merely a religious precept but a wisdom that transcends our present difficulties. To love one's enemies does not imply weakness or compromise. Instead, it calls for using tolerance and rationality to overcome hatred and anger, thereby achieving true inner freedom.

When we face the corruption and exploitation in society, anger and hatred might be our natural responses. Yet anger does not solve problems—instead, it can mire us in a quagmire of emotion.

Choosing to love our enemies is a higher call. It means that while we obey the law and act justly, we maintain inner peace and compassion.

“Anti-Japanese Plus” as a concept can sometimes degenerate into a narrow, tool-like patriotism driven by interest groups—a myopic and unthinking form of patriotism. As free people created by God, our first duty is to love ourselves and our fellow citizens—not to serve as mere “tools” of patriotism but rather to benefit others through our work; whether by providing healthy food grown with our own vegetables and grains, by carrying out law enforcement with fairness and justice, or by delivering healthcare that embodies the mission of healing.

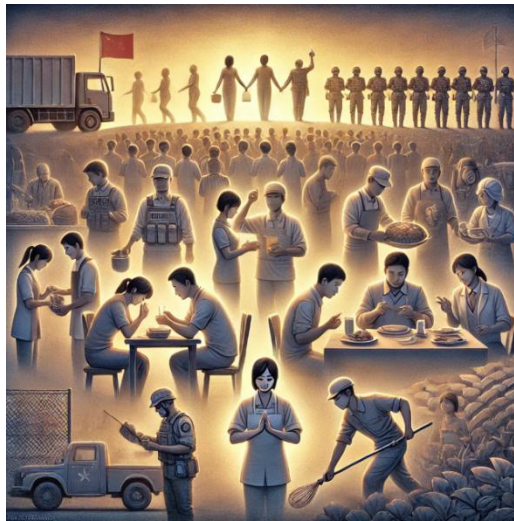
In contrast, fighting against corrupt officials and exploitative merchants is essentially about loving society, upholding justice, and championing fairness. With such love, many can break free from narrow-minded “toolman” roles, and understand that a nation separated by mere borders may be both a perpetrator and a victim of war. The vast majority of people in that nation, over the past 70-plus years, have rapidly risen, benefitting their communities. In this way, we can also understand the reasons for “loving our enemies” and turning our focus inward to enhance our overall strength—maintaining independence, peace, and power in a complex society.

From another perspective, loving one’s enemies does not equate with condoning or forgiving the crimes of the enemy—this is God’s prerogative—but it is the foundation upon which people should correctly examine themselves. Without such a heart, one cannot truly live out a free life.

4. Get the Job Done and Learn from Others’ Excellence

Today’s citizens should focus more on how to be the best in their roles and how to live a life that is law-abiding and virtuous. The historical sentiment of anti-Japanese resistance cannot become an excuse to neglect current realities; rather, fighting against corruption and exploitation is our most pressing task today. When facing those who destroy social fairness and justice, beyond using legal channels to defend our rights, we must also ensure that our own work is filled with care for others—whether

by producing healthy food, delivering warmth in healthcare, or ensuring that law enforcement embodies fairness and humanity. Many who move to countries such as the United States or Japan often remark that their values—and even their very senses—seem to be upended. Increasingly, people no longer watch television news at 7 p.m. but instead turn to their phones to understand what is happening in the world. Therefore, our mission is not to “fight external enemies” but to “fight internal traitors”; not to resist outright, but to learn humbly from the strengths of others—so that the money spent gaining overseas experience is not wasted.



When we criticize today’s elders—those former “revolutionary youths” of the Cultural Revolution—for growing old, can we imagine that the harsh environment of the past deprived them of the care they might have otherwise received, leaving them permanently unable to love their neighbors?

And when we condemn those who work in low-level jobs assembling Japanese cars or, with weapons in hand, attempt to murder innocent Japanese nationals in China, can we consider the education that drove them to vent their “hatred”—hatred born from hunger, from consuming toxic food and drink, or from abandoning treatment due to exorbitant medical fees—onto the descendants of those who fought 70 years ago?

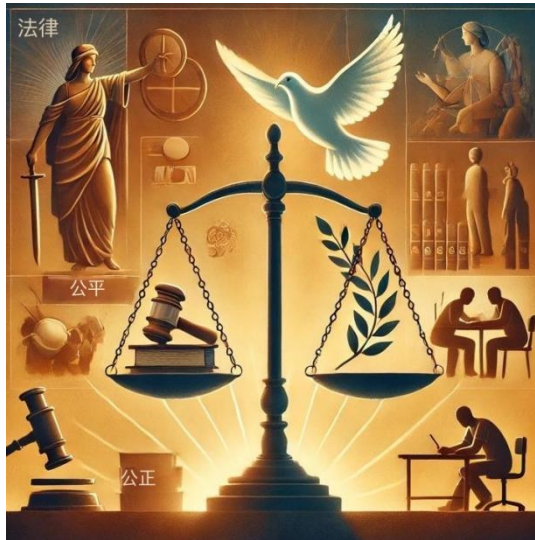
Reading such news reminds one of the Chinese proverb: “One handsome face can hide a hundred flaws.” Indeed, after 70 years

since the victory in the War of Resistance, if we still idolize those who “resist and kill” the Japanese to cover up the many “ugly” issues affecting people’s livelihoods, what then is the true significance of our war heroes? Have they simply become shields for some opposition in the eyes of the people?

Many lifelong “patriots” in China may not have realized that, apart from the efforts of revolutionary martyrs, we also receive passionate support and assistance from numerous post-war nations. If we do not let go of the “hatred” in our hearts, how can we understand a love that transcends geographical boundaries?

A Few Suggestions

Advocate for and Uphold the Rule of Law: Ensure that every individual is truly equal before the law. The law is not only a tool against external enemies but also a safeguard for every citizen when facing internal injustice. Faced with social injustices, we must not remain silent—through legal channels and rational voices, we must call for social fairness so that corrupt officials and exploitative merchants can find no refuge. Regardless of the industry we work in, we should adhere to professional ethics and reject any form of deception, corruption, or illegal activity. Every person acting justly in their role is the greatest contribution to society. Whether you are a Christian or adhere to another faith, you should manifest the power of your belief in daily life. Loving your enemies does not mean condoning corrupt behavior; rather, it means using the law and fairness to counteract evil while maintaining inner peace and resolve.



Conclusion:

Regardless of who calls on us to be patriotic, the foundation must be in fighting corruption and resisting internal injustice. This is fundamental because only by ensuring the basic needs of food and shelter can we truly progress—eating toxic food is not a foundation for prosperity, while eating healthy food and drinking clean beverages is.

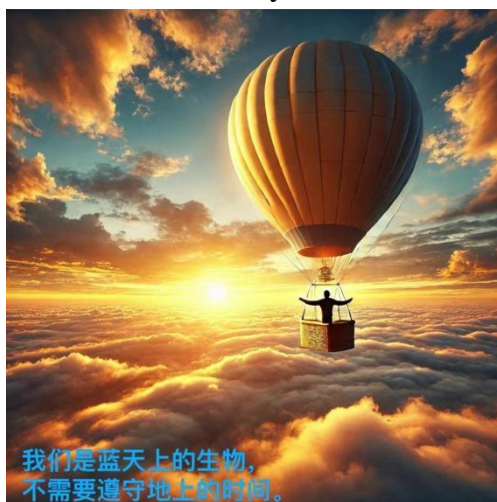
The object of loving one's enemies is not limited to the Japanese; it extends to anyone who comes into conflict with interest groups. We do not love because we are incited by external interest groups, but because we know that we bear God's image and therefore wish to live out His love. Such love makes us aware of who we are, whom we live for, and to whom we give glory.

Different lands, different peoples—but love your neighbor as yourself. Let us pray together for this cause!

“Unburdened” – Living Out a Life of Freedom

Dear brothers and sisters, in life we are often overwhelmed by various pressures and anxieties. Whether it is work responsibilities or family burdens, these challenges can leave us completely drained. Without even mentioning the endless worries about our children’s education from infancy through all their school years—and later the concerns about them studying, working, marrying, and starting their own families far from home—the title “Unburdened” is not meant to imply a lack of care or thought. Rather, it is meant to remind us to entrust our thoughts and worries into God’s hands.

As Christians, we possess a special kind of freedom in Christ. This freedom is not merely external; it comes from the deep inner peace and trust that fill our hearts. As one line in the film *The Balloonist* reminds us, “We are creatures of the blue sky, not bound by the time of the earth.” This line deeply moved me—it reminds us that as Christians our identity is not confined to earthly matters but, by relying on God, we can break free from worldly constraints and live a truly liberated life.



Becoming as Childlike Believers

Jesus teaches in Matthew 18:3, “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.” Here, “little children” does not mean immature; it indicates that we need to face life with a heart of simplicity and trust. Children are carefree because they know

their parents will take care of everything—they simply trust and depend. This is exactly what Jesus expects of us. We need not overly worry about the future because God already has everything in His hands.

In terms more familiar to Chinese culture: the heart is like a pocket. When it holds nothing, it is the soul; when it holds a little, it is the “inner eye”; when it holds much, it is preoccupied with plans; when it holds even more, it is scheming; and when overloaded, it becomes filled with burdens. That empty, unencumbered heart is the command center by which God guides us—while any extra “stuff” becomes the unwanted noise that prevents us from experiencing true freedom and joy.

The Responsibility of Parents: Surrender and Trust

As parents, we often believe that our children are not brave, smart, or mature enough, lacking sufficient life experience, so we do our best to pass on all our knowledge to them, hoping to help them avoid mistakes. Yet such an approach may inadvertently hinder the natural unfolding of their unique God-given nature. Children have their own paths of growth; God’s work in their lives is distinct from our own.

As Christian parents, our greatest responsibility is to entrust everything—including our children—to God. We need to let go—not because we do not care about their future, but because we trust that God knows their way far better than we do and loves them more than we do. Rather than using our experiences to shape them, we should encourage them to lean on God, so that they can courageously face life under His guidance.

In truth, a child’s growth is always accompanied and guided by God; what we consider as “care” and “guidance” on our part may, without notice, become mere noise and obstacles on their developmental path. The love we cultivate in them truly grows when we allow God to lead.



Relying on God to Break Free from Anxiety

We live in a world that relentlessly pursues efficiency and perfection, and pressure is everywhere. This pressure comes not only from our external environment but also from our own high expectations. Yet, as taught in *Stress-Free Productivity*, we do not need to be perfect or rush to meet every goal. In contrast, God has never required us to be flawless in every detail of life. He desires that we cast our burdens on Him and trust that He will lead us on the right path.

In Matthew 11:28–30, Jesus invites, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” This invitation is a divine comfort, reminding us that when we are overwhelmed, we can come before Him and obtain true rest and release. Through prayer, meditation, and drawing near to God, we can find the strength to cast off anxiety and return to peace.

Courageously Facing Life and Enjoying True Freedom

Faith does not mean that challenges and problems will no longer come our way; rather, it means that we can face these challenges from a new perspective. When we depend on God, our hearts are no longer swayed by the external circumstances. We can confront life’s uncertainties with courage, knowing that God stands behind us. Whether it is in studies, work, or everyday tasks, we learn to meet challenges calmly and without allowing anxiety or unease to dictate our emotions.

As Philippians 4:6–7 says, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which

transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” This scripture reminds us that when we choose to rely on God, He grants us peace beyond human understanding to keep us steady in the midst of hardships.



Conclusion: Living Out That Life of Freedom

Dear brothers and sisters, whether you are a parent or a devoted student, may you live out that unburdened, free life under God’s guidance. As the film’s line suggests, we are “creatures of the blue sky,” not shackled by earthly time or rules, and no longer bound by anxiety or turmoil. God has already prepared abundant grace and strength for you, so that at every moment you may face life with courage and calm.

May we all be like the little children Jesus described—trusting wholeheartedly in His guidance—and live out the true freedom and joy that come only from Him.

As the saying goes, “Those who plant without intention may yet see their willows blossom.” Let us pray together for this cause!

How Did Tocqueville View the Dilemma of Highly Centralized Societies and the Path to Transformation?

Introduction: The Journey from Powerlessness to Awakening

“History tells us that every society must inevitably wrestle with the struggle between power and freedom. When power expands without restraint, the dignity and rights of individuals gradually vanish, and society falls into a state of passive silence. Yet when freedom is awakened, the abuse of power is challenged and resisted, sparking new social vitality.” — If Alexis de Tocqueville (1805–1859, the French historian, politician, and founding figure of political sociology) were still alive today, he might well begin his analysis of our current highly centralized society with such words.

The condition of a highly centralized society can be described as a form of collective “restricted passivity.” Although many have gradually become aware of the problems, dual pressures from both the external environment and internal psychology make effective action difficult. Many people find themselves helplessly trapped in a state of being “locked down”:

“Unable to get out” – not only are immigration and travel restricted, but social channels have become blocked, with upward mobility sealed off.

“Unable to think clearly” – prolonged ideological indoctrination and information control have weakened critical thinking.

“Lacking courage” – refined selfishness and cynicism lead people to avoid public responsibilities.

“Afraid to resist” – in facing overpowering authority without legal protection or systemic guarantees, individuals feel they cannot muster resistance.

How, then, can this state be broken? From where should people begin to reshape the power structure of society?

In works such as *Democracy in America* and *The Old Regime and the Revolution*, Tocqueville explored similar social phenomena and formulated a series of classic theories. In the following, we begin with Tocqueville’s core ideas, combine them with aspects of contemporary social conditions, analyze the roots of the predicament, and explore possible paths to solutions in

search of a way forward from individual awakening to social transformation.



Part I: An Analysis of Current Society – Four States and the Predicament of Mass Passivity

1. “Unable to Get Out” – The Limits of the External Environment and the Spread of Powerlessness

Tocqueville noted in *Democracy in America*: “When state power continually expands and the avenues of social mobility become increasingly obstructed, the freedom of individual action is fettered by unseen chains.” In a highly centralized society, “unable to get out” refers not only to blocked visas and restricted immigration but also to the rigidification of social structures and the closure of upward channels. With power and resources concentrated in the hands of a small elite, most people lose the ability to choose their own fate—sometimes not just within one generation, but even across several. This creates a pervasive sense of powerlessness and deep-seated disappointment about the future.

- **Limited Social Mobility and the Entrapment of Destiny:** Similar to Tocqueville’s analysis of the Ancien Régime in France, the concentration of power leads to entrenched social classes and blocked mobility. Individuals find themselves unable to change their fate through legitimate means—a state that can extend over generations. This results in widespread feelings of impotence.

- **The Spread of a “Locked-In” Mentality:** Tocqueville argued that when individuals lose freedom of action, their spirits

are gradually eroded by fear and helplessness, ultimately plunging society into pervasive cynicism and passivity. In such states, many choose either to “internalize competition” (expending energy on futile contests) or to “lie flat” (abandon aspirations and resistance).

2. “Unable to Think Clearly” – Prolonged Ideological Control and the Confinement of Thought

Tocqueville observed: “The most terrible tyrannies are not those that inflict pain, but those that deprive people of the sense of pain.” When prolonged ideological control and the blockade of information become the norm, an individual’s ability to think critically is slowly eroded. Even if one becomes aware of the existence of problems, it becomes difficult to understand their root causes.

- **The Internalization of Ideology and the “Gentle Shackles” on Thought:** Tocqueville noted in *Democracy in America* that a democratic society can sometimes give rise to a “soft despotism”—one that, through ideological indoctrination and the educational system, encourages people to voluntarily accept a state of passive obedience. In such societies, long-term education and propaganda lead citizens not to question authority but to view “obedience” as a moral duty.

- **“Doublethink” and Cognitive Confusion:** Growing up in an environment replete with conflicting information, people may adapt to a mode of “doublethink,” in which they simultaneously accept mutually contradictory views without experiencing internal conflict. In such a state, systematic critical thinking is stifled, and the true nature of the problem remains obscured. Tocqueville believed this cognitive confusion traps society in a vortex of self-deception.

3. “Lacking Courage” – Refined Selfishness and the Cynicism That Prevents Resistance

In *The Old Regime and the Revolution*, Tocqueville described the phenomenon of “refined selfishness” that prevailed on the eve of the French Revolution: individuals striving to maximize their own interests while avoiding any engagement with public responsibility. He argued that this form of selfishness arose from a general sense of powerlessness and fear of authority.

- **The Convergence of Selfishness and Cynicism:** In that society, when confronted with powerful authority, many retreated into the private sphere, meticulously managing their own lives while shunning public duty. This refined selfishness, intertwined with cynicism (a deep skepticism of moral pursuits and public ideals), led to a widespread disregard for social justice. Tocqueville noted that this mentality was not merely an expression of powerlessness but also a renunciation of the spirit of freedom.

- **Lack of Moral Courage and the Dissolution of Social Responsibility:** Tocqueville emphasized that the formation of a free society requires “moral courage”—the willingness to sacrifice personal interests in defense of truth and justice. In today’s highly centralized society, many lack such moral courage, having grown accustomed to surviving under fear.

4. **“Afraid to Resist” – Political Repression and the Absence of Legal and Institutional Support**

Tocqueville observed in his analysis of the Ancien Régime that “when law becomes an appendage of power, individuals lose their trust in justice.” In that society, when individuals faced injustice, they found it difficult to appeal to the law; any attempt to challenge authority risked severe political retaliation.

- **The Negation of Law and the Collapse of Social Justice:** In highly centralized societies, the law is often viewed solely as an instrument to maintain order rather than as a defender of justice. When citizens are unable to use legal means to protect their rights, their willingness and ability to resist abuse of power are significantly undermined.

- **Political Retaliation and the Erosion of Social Trust:** Tocqueville argued that any society must be built on a “social contract” in which citizens trust that the government will execute the law fairly and impartially. When this trust is broken, society falls into a general mood of suspicion and indifference.

Part II: The Deep-Rooted Causes of Social Predicaments and Tocqueville’s Theoretical Foundations

1. **Concentration of Power and “Soft Despotism”**

In *Democracy in America*, Tocqueville introduced the concept of “soft despotism,” revealing a form of power expansion in modern society that appears harmless yet is dangerously pervasive. This form of despotism does not enforce control through violence and terror but, in the name of “public interest” or “social harmony,” exerts a gentle yet omnipresent control over individuals.

- **Manifestations of “Soft Despotism” in Highly Centralized States:** In such a state, although political movements may no longer be as extreme as during the era of “literary/revolutionary” fervor, state control remains stringent—expressed in a more subtle, gentle, and institutionalized manner. Through education, media control, and even “social credit systems,” the state molds citizen behavior, gradually eroding independent judgment and individual will. This pattern of power not only diminishes citizens’ resolve to resist but also induces a kind of “voluntary submission” in which, despite being aware of the problems, people yield to fear and systemic guidance.

- **Tocqueville’s Warning on the Perils of Soft Despotism:** Tocqueville warned that soft despotism is more dangerous than traditional forms of brutal despotism because it does not provoke open rebellion or uprising. Instead, it quietly undermines individual autonomy until the entire society is trapped in a state of “voluntary slavery.” In such a condition, society may appear externally stable and harmonious, but it is, in reality, shackled by a profound spiritual bondage that drains its vitality and moral resilience.

2. **Weakening of the Rule of Law and the “Instrumentalization” of Legislation**

Tocqueville remarked in *The Old Regime and the Revolution* that the law should act as a “neutral arbitrator” between citizens and state power. However, when the law becomes a mere appendage of power, it loses its capacity to uphold justice and instead turns into a tool for controlling society and suppressing dissent.

- **The “Instrumentalization” of Law:** In contemporary highly centralized societies, legal frameworks may nominally guarantee the protection of citizens’ rights in the constitution, but in practice, they are frequently subject to

interference from administrative power and political imperatives. Law is often used as a tool for maintaining stability rather than as a cornerstone for defending citizens' rights. Tocqueville warned that when law is subordinated to political needs, individuals lose trust in justice, and society eventually descends into a widespread nihilism regarding the rule of law.

- **Lack of Checks and Balances Leading to Legal Ineffectiveness:** Tocqueville argued that only when the legislative, judicial, and executive powers are balanced against one another can the law effectively protect citizens from arbitrary power. However, in a highly centralized state, where power is too concentrated, the law loses its independence and fails to constrain power effectively. Instead, it is used to legitimize the expansion of power and to suppress dissenters, leaving the public feeling helpless in the face of abuse and further deepening societal powerlessness.

3. **Extreme Individualism and Cynicism (“Atomization”)**

Tocqueville believed that the healthy functioning of a democratic society depends on a combination of individual freedom and public spirit. When individuals care only about their own interests and neglect public affairs, society becomes “atomized.” In that state, while individuals may appear free, they have actually lost their capacity for genuine political and social participation.

- **Cynicism and Refined Selfishness in Highly Centralized Societies:** Today, many people in highly centralized societies choose to withdraw from public life and concentrate on personal or family interests. This phenomenon of refined selfishness, which on the surface might seem a pragmatic adaptation to complexity, is essentially an escape from social responsibility. Tocqueville argued that when individual freedom is divorced from public spirit, it degenerates into a form of negative, self-serving freedom that ultimately leads to widespread cynicism within society.

- **The Perils of Cynicism and the “Collective Action Problem”:** According to Tocqueville, cynicism brings with it a collective action dilemma: everyone recognizes the problems but, lacking trust or mechanisms for cooperation, no one is willing to

act. In the end, everyone remains trapped in a state of “waiting for someone else to move,” and the drive for social change is lost. This cynical attitude manifests as “playing it safe” and adopting an “it’s none of my business” stance, so that even if a few individuals attempt to trigger change, they struggle to garner broad support.

4. **The Loss of Public Spirit and “Voluntary Slavery”**

Tocqueville maintained that the absence of public spirit is the fundamental cause of a democratic society’s decay. In *The Old Regime and the Revolution*, he argued that when individuals concern themselves solely with private affairs, state power is free to expand and gradually lead society into a condition of “voluntary slavery.” In this state, people prefer to sacrifice their political freedom and social rights for the sake of immediate material benefits and a sense of security.

- **The Phenomenon of “Voluntary Slavery” in Highly Centralized States:** In today’s highly centralized nation, many citizens display a “voluntary conformity” when facing state power. In order to avoid risk, they willingly relinquish the right to express themselves and to act, accepting an ordered but stifled social arrangement. This state is not imposed by overt coercion; it arises because individuals, over years of suppression, have internalized an “acceptance of the status quo.”

- **Tocqueville’s Analysis of Voluntary Slavery:** Tocqueville noted that the most dangerous aspect of voluntary slavery is that it does not provoke strong resistance because each person feels a certain “security.” They sacrifice freedom in exchange for a temporary peace. Yet this state, although seemingly stable, is fragile. Should the material foundations of society be shaken—by an economic crisis or political turmoil—the superficial stability would quickly collapse, plunging society into chaos and disorder.



Part III: From Predicament to Breakthrough—Paths and Strategies from Tocqueville’s Perspective

1. From Individual Awakening to Social Engagement: Rebuilding the “Public Spirit”

Tocqueville believed that the first step toward social change begins with the awakening of individual consciousness, particularly through the reconstruction of the public spirit. When citizens recognize that they are not only managers of their private lives but also active participants in public affairs, the seeds of a free society can begin to sprout.

- **Rebuilding Personal Responsibility and Moral Courage:** Tocqueville pointed out that the vitality of a democratic society comes from the sense of responsibility that individuals feel toward public matters. To achieve this, it is essential to use education and cultural enlightenment to help people understand their roles in society. In highly centralized societies, intellectuals, religious leaders, and thought provokers must take on this responsibility—spreading ideas and engaging in cultural activities to awaken the public’s sense of civic duty.

- **Establishing Small Communities and Social Trust Networks:** Tocqueville argued that when large-scale social structures fail to function effectively, small communities and local self-governing organizations become the sources of social vitality. In our context, establishing small groups—such as community study groups, religious gatherings, and cultural salons—can help rebuild social trust. Although these groups may

be small in scale, they offer citizens a safe space for discussion and action, ultimately fostering the growth of broader social forces.

2. Promoting Grassroots Democracy and Social Autonomy: Starting “From the Bottom Up”

In *Democracy in America*, Tocqueville praised the American system of local autonomy. He argued that local governance is the most reliable guarantor of freedom because it allows citizens to directly participate in public affairs and to feel the impact of their actions.

- **Expanding Local Governance and Grassroots Autonomy:**In our society, promoting grassroots democratic elections and community self-governance can boost public participation. Although the centralization of power may be difficult to change in the short term, gradually increasing the power of local governments and civil society can lay a foundation for future institutional reforms.

- **Strengthening Public Expression and Social Oversight:**Citizens should be encouraged to participate in local affairs—such as environmental protection and community services—and to use legal means to gradually expand their voice in local governance. Tocqueville repeatedly emphasized in *Democracy in America* that citizen participation and public debate are crucial in preventing despotism. Even within highly centralized societies, individuals can start by engaging in local projects (e.g., community safety, educational affairs) to expand their influence in social life. This “bottom-up” strategy not only cultivates a sense of participation among citizens but also reinforces their responsibility and belonging in public affairs.

Specific Strategies:

- **Introducing Participatory Budgeting in Local Governance:** In local government and community management, introduce mechanisms that allow community members to participate in decisions related to public funds and projects. Tocqueville believed that such participation helps citizens understand the tangible influence they wield locally, thereby boosting confidence in public affairs.

- **Encouraging Community Hearings, Public Discussions, and Local Elections:** Establish processes that allow citizens to experience and practice democratic participation in a relatively safe environment. Although initially these mechanisms might cover non-sensitive areas, over time they can cultivate an open public culture.

- **Promoting Local Autonomy and Cultivating Civil Society:** Tocqueville emphasized local autonomy as the core of democratic spirit. Local autonomy enables citizens to focus on concrete public issues rather than becoming lost in abstract political debates. For our society, encouraging local self-governance and grassroots elections can help foster a civic oversight mentality. Particularly in rural areas and urban communities, experimenting with more transparent democratic elections and decision-making processes can offer citizens the opportunity to exert influence in local governance.

Practical Pathways:

- Conduct pilot programs in villages and neighborhood committees with more open and just elections, and legally ensure the fairness and transparency of these processes. Such pilots can serve as test cases for larger-scale reforms, gradually advancing the transparency and legitimacy of grassroots power.

- Establish “citizen assemblies” or “public advisory committees” in local communities. These bodies would allow citizens to deliberate on local public affairs (such as urban planning, community management, and fiscal allocation), thereby forming a preliminary system of checks and balances.

3. Promoting “Rights-Protection-Based” Rule of Law Construction: Strengthening Checks on Power Through Legal Means

Tocqueville argued in *The Old Regime and the Revolution* that when the law can effectively limit power, the soil for a free society can be cultivated. A core problem in our society today is that the effectiveness of the law is undermined by the power it is meant to check rather than being subject to that power. Therefore, restoring the authority of the rule of law is key to achieving social transformation.

- **Establishing an Independent Judicial System:** To resolve the predicament of being “afraid to resist,” it is crucial to reconstruct the capacity of the law to restrict power through legal reforms. Tocqueville believed that an independent judicial institution is the final safeguard of citizens’ rights. For our society, this means gradually introducing reforms such as:

- **Establishing an Independent Constitutional Court:** Create a dedicated constitutional court or supervisory agency that reviews the constitutionality of all laws and government actions. Tocqueville emphasized that such a court can establish an effective system of checks between state power and citizens’ rights, preventing the abuse of power.

- **Reforming the Independence of Judicial Personnel:** Create independent judicial appointment committees to ensure that judges are no longer directly interfered with by administrative or party agencies. This will allow judges to remain impartial and stand independently when confronting state power.

- **Introducing “Public Rights Protection Mechanisms”:** To safeguard citizens’ rights to express themselves and to participate in public affairs, establish specialized “public rights protection institutions” (such as human rights commissions or freedom of information offices) that provide legal avenues for redress when citizens face injustices.

- **Enhancing Legal Transparency and Fairness:** Enact legislation mandating “information disclosure,” ensuring that the government must make relevant information public when making decisions or enforcing laws. Increased transparency can effectively curb the abuse of power and enhance citizens’ trust in the law.

4. Introducing a “Multipolar Checks and Balances” Mechanism: Gradually Achieving the Separation of Powers

Tocqueville noted in his analysis of the pre-revolutionary French system: “Any society that lacks a multipolar balance of power is unable to resist arbitrary power.” A fundamental problem in our society is the extreme concentration of power, with a deficiency of effective separation and checks. To effect true social transformation, power must be gradually diversified and

distributed through institutional arrangements that ensure its separation.

- **From Party-Government Separation to Multipolar Balance:** Currently, power in our society is highly concentrated within the central government and ruling party, leading to a lack of external checks. Tocqueville maintained that genuine checks on power must begin with “multiplicity in power holders”—in other words, by incorporating an independent legislature, local autonomous forces, and social oversight bodies.

- **Promoting the Separation of Party and Government, and Establishing a Balance Between Administration and Legislation:** Reform the system gradually to promote “party-government separation,” reducing the direct interference of party organs in administrative management, so that administrative bodies can operate independently under legal and public oversight. Tocqueville warned that when political and administrative powers are overly merged, the system of checks and balances fails and power can expand without limit. Only through a clear separation of party and government can power be mutually constrained.

- **Expanding Local Autonomy and Establishing a “Decentralized Checks and Balances” System:** At the local level, grant local governments greater autonomy in decision-making, and establish independent local legislative bodies and local elections to strengthen the independence of local power. Tocqueville argued that local autonomy is the foundation of the democratic spirit because it allows citizens to truly feel the force of power in local affairs. Gradually expanding local legislative and self-governance powers can help disperse centralization and establish a preliminary “decentralized checks and balances” system.

- **Promoting Media Freedom and Social Supervision:** In *Democracy in America*, Tocqueville particularly stressed the role of a free press and public scrutiny. He noted, “Without a free press, citizens lose their ability to warn against the abuse of power.” For our society, fostering media freedom and expanding public oversight will be critical steps toward social transformation.

- **Relaxing News Control to Allow the Development of Independent Media:** Through legislation that guarantees media independence, gradually lift the strict constraints on news reporting so that citizens can access accurate information from diverse media channels. Even if, initially, the scale and influence of independent media may be limited, their very existence serves as a check on power.
- **Establishing “Citizen Participation” Supervision Mechanisms:** Allow citizens and the media to legally monitor and criticize government behavior by creating a “safe space” for public opinion oversight. Tocqueville argued that only when citizens can freely express opinions and use legal means to supervise power will the abuse of authority be effectively curbed.

Part IV: Conclusion---The Transformation from Powerlessness to Strength

Tocqueville once said, “The strength of any society is derived from the free will and sense of responsibility of its individuals.” Today’s highly centralized society stands at a historic crossroads: on one hand, the concentration of power and the pervasive cynicism have plunged citizens into a widespread sense of powerlessness; on the other hand, economic development and the advancement of information technology also offer fresh opportunities for individual awakening and social transformation.

Only when individuals realize their responsibilities and gradually break free from the “voluntary enslavement”—both in thought and in action—can the forces for social change begin to emerge. Such a transformation may take time, but history shows that every great social revolution has its roots in the awakening and actions of a few pioneers. Therefore, when confronted with our predicament, we must not simply wait passively; we need to begin by awakening the individual, rebuilding society, reforming the law, and establishing checks and balances on power—gradually transforming our highly centralized society from a state of “passive powerlessness” into one of “active participation.”

The future of social transformation requires not only what Tocqueville called the return of the “public spirit” but also a re-recognition by citizens of the values of freedom and responsibility. Only when more and more people can transcend the conditions of “being unable to get out, thinking unclearly, lacking courage, and fearing to resist” and truly assume their civic responsibilities will the power for social change accumulate and drive our nation toward a freer and fairer social environment. Tocqueville believed that social transformation depends not only on institutional changes but also on whether the hearts of citizens can awaken and express the pursuit of freedom, responsibility, and justice in their actions. The current predicament in our society is precisely that both individuals and society are stuck in a state of “passive passivity”: while the concentration of power and the closed institutional structure are the main culprits, prolonged social suppression has gradually robbed individuals of the will and courage to express themselves freely, fostering a widespread cynical mindset.

Nevertheless, historical experience teaches us that the opportunity for social change often lies in the smallest spark of individual awareness and in the gradual emergence of grassroots social forces. As more people step out from their sense of powerlessness and begin to rebuild trust, responsibility, and active engagement in their personal lives, community affairs, and public discussions, the vitality of society will be rekindled.

Thus, the transformation from “powerlessness” to “strength” must be a multi-layered and gradual process. Below, drawing from Tocqueville’s theoretical perspective, we outline three major phases and key strategies for the future transformation of highly centralized society, sketching a long-term pathway from individual awakening to institutional reform.

Phase One: Individual Awakening and the Rebuilding of Thought

Tocqueville believed that the precondition for social change is the awakening of individual thought and the reconstruction of the public spirit. Only when individuals can free themselves in thought from fear and liberate their spirits from cynicism can social change truly take root. Our present predicament is that people are ensnared in a deep psychological bondage—a

condition that is a typical manifestation of what Tocqueville described as “voluntary enslavement.” The first step for the future must therefore be the reconstruction of individual consciousness:

1. **Breaking the “Prison of Thought” and Rebuilding Critical Thinking:** Tocqueville argued that when society is controlled by a coercive ideology, individuals gradually lose the ability to think independently, thus becoming prisoners of their own thoughts. In our society, this phenomenon manifests through the education system and media that long promote a singular mode of thinking, leaving the public unable to think or judge independently.

Strategy: With today’s information technology, create online discussion groups, cultural salons, and hybrid (online/offline) book clubs to encourage individuals to foster critical thinking through self-education and exchange of ideas. Tocqueville noted that the liberation of thought begins with freedom of speech; even if early discussions are limited to non-sensitive topics, establishing these independent discussion spaces can provide the necessary soil for the awakening of thought.

2. **Rebuilding Personal Moral Courage and a Sense of Social Responsibility:** Tocqueville maintained that true social change requires not only an awakening in thought but also moral courage and a sense of responsibility toward society. Today, many people in our society surrender the pursuit of justice and truth out of fear, treating “silence” as a survival strategy. This state can only be transformed by rebuilding moral courage.

Strategy: Draw inspiration from historical figures—such as early revolutionaries, social activists, or even modern public welfare leaders—to encourage people to reexamine their moral responsibilities. Tocqueville pointed out that when a society lacks heroes, individuals lose the motivation to pursue higher values. Therefore, reviving the images of these heroes and integrating their spirit into contemporary culture is an important step in rebuilding moral courage.

3. **Building Small Communities and Trust Networks:** Tocqueville emphasized that when individual power is dispersed and isolated, people become engulfed by helplessness

and fear. Thus, the first step toward social change is to rebuild trust among individuals by establishing small communities and local organizations. In our case, this rebuilding can begin with non-political community activities, cultural salons, and religious groups.

Strategy: Encourage the formation of small groups based on common interests, public welfare initiatives, and cultural exchanges. Although these communities might not directly address political issues, they can provide a relatively safe space for intellectual and emotional dialogue, gradually forming the foundation for social trust and collective action.

Phase Two: Social Engagement and the Expansion of Public Space

Tocqueville believed that as individuals realize their power and begin to act, the public sphere expands. This process must be achieved through concrete social engagement and public action. Although our public space has long been suppressed, in recent years, the rise of the Internet and new media has gradually increased citizen participation in public affairs. While this trend has encountered strong resistance, it also indicates that the demand for public space continues to grow.

1. **Promoting Grassroots Democracy and Community Participation:** Tocqueville argued that local autonomy and grassroots democracy are the cornerstones of a democratic society. The future of our social transformation can begin with grassroots communities and local autonomy. By expanding elections and autonomy for village and community committees, citizens can have more opportunities to directly participate in local public affairs.

Strategy: In rural areas and urban communities, promote more open and just grassroots elections while gradually easing restrictions on candidate qualifications. By expanding local autonomy and democratic practice, citizens can truly feel their rights and power in local affairs, thereby increasing their interest in and participation in public matters.

2. **Establishing “Public Assemblies” and Community Forums:** Tocqueville believed that when citizens can express opinions and participate in decision-making in public affairs, their civic

consciousness grows rapidly. Accordingly, communities and local governments should establish “public assemblies” or “community forums” where citizens can openly discuss local issues (such as environmental protection and community management).

Strategy: Organize “local citizen assemblies” or “community forums” to provide an opportunity for residents to discuss and negotiate local affairs in a bottom-up participation mechanism. This approach helps cultivate political awareness and lays the groundwork for broader social engagement.

3. **Developing Social Welfare and Oversight Organizations:** Tocqueville noted that social welfare and oversight organizations serve as a “buffer” between the state and the citizens, helping to prevent the intensification of social conflicts. For our country, promoting the development of such organizations—particularly in relatively “safe” fields like education, environmental protection, and poverty alleviation—can help achieve this goal.

Strategy: Encourage and support the formation of social welfare organizations and independent oversight bodies. Through these entities, citizens can find legitimate channels to participate in public affairs, gradually pushing the society toward a more open and participatory model.

Phase Three: Institutional Reform and the Realization of Checks and Balances on Power

Tocqueville believed that once social engagement and public spirit are established, institutional reform becomes the next inevitable step in social change. The goal of institutional reform is to achieve the separation of powers and balance, allowing all segments of society to express their opinions within the framework of the law and to realize a balance of interests through institutionalized means.

1. **Introducing a “Decentralized Checks and Balances” Mechanism:** In *The Old Regime and the Revolution*, Tocqueville noted that without effective separation of powers, society falls into a vicious cycle of excessive centralization. The objective for future reform, therefore, is to gradually introduce mechanisms of decentralized checks and balances that ensure mutual restraint and oversight.

Strategy: Gradually introduce the separation of powers among the legislative, judicial, and executive branches at both local and central levels. Use local legislation, independent judiciary, and media oversight to achieve diversified distribution of power.

2. **Advancing the Establishment of a Constitutional System:**

A constitutional system, as Tocqueville saw it, is the highest form of achieving freedom and the rule of law. By establishing independent constitutional courts and citizens' rights protection agencies, we can ensure that all government actions are conducted within the framework of law and subject to public supervision.

Strategy: Establish independent constitutional courts and supervisory committees to review the constitutionality of all government actions and prevent excessive concentration of power.

Conclusion: The Historical Mission from Awakening to Action

Tocqueville summarized, "A free society is not granted by heaven but is gradually established through the long-term efforts and struggles of its citizens." Our nation's social transformation similarly relies on the awakening and persistence of countless individuals—from the personal to the communal, from society to the institutions—ultimately achieving a society that is freer and more just. Only when an increasing number of people move from passive obedience to proactive engagement will genuine social change become possible.

This is not to say that a highly centralized system is entirely devoid of merit, nor that a constitutional system is automatically suitable for our country. However, a system that prevents free thought and the pursuit of a joyful life cannot be acceptable. Awakening is not instantaneous, and moral courage is not instantly acquired; time will ultimately tell the truth, and even the youth who now lie flat will eventually stand up to bear witness to history.

If there is sufficient time, let us pray together for this cause!

What Should We Care For? – A Brother Gu’s Transformative Sharing

Brother Gu is a little over four years older than I. After graduating from college, he worked in a city in the northeastern part of the Shandong Peninsula. Over the more than twenty years since coming to faith, his life has undergone tremendous transformation. During the recent festive season, we met and talked at length about the struggles and breakthroughs in our spiritual journeys. He very much hoped that I could share some of his insights so that more brothers and sisters might mutually encourage one another in the Lord and be renewed by the grace of Jesus Christ.

1. The Loss in the Early Life: Indulgence of the Flesh Leading to Decay

(From hedonistic indulgence to bewilderment, with the soul increasingly bound by sin)

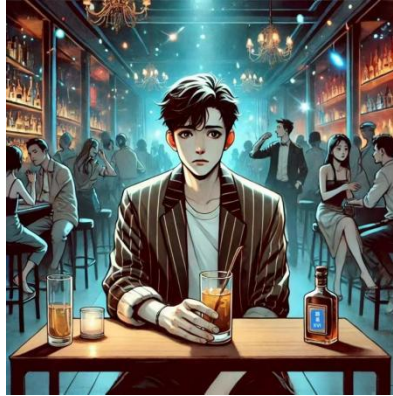
Brother Gu has just retired this year. Several years ago he underwent a heart stent procedure. Having been a Buddhist believer in his youth before being chosen by the Lord to become a Christian, he has walked a path spanning over twenty years of spiritual transformation. Looking back on the first half of his life, he is filled with deep emotion. Although he has been a believer for many years, the lifestyle of gratifying the flesh in his youth continued to exert a long-term, profound influence on him.

From childhood, Brother Gu was known for his strong words and defiant spirit—never one to submit. In his twenties, eager to prove himself, he believed that the rules of society were nothing more than “survival of the fittest.” He looked down upon those who strictly followed the rules, considering them to lack ambition. With a head full of youthful passion and fearlessness, he ventured boldly into society, engaging in many risky and dangerous behaviors: heavy drinking, street racing, fighting, reveling in music and dance, and roaming nightlife venues with “tough” friends—all of whom prided themselves on their “street smarts.” In his eyes, though risky, such a life was exhilarating and full of achievement. His motto was: “A man must be daring; only by defying death can life be exciting!”

Yet behind these indulgences lay sins that gradually eroded both his soul and body. At that time he had not yet accepted Christ as his personal Savior. When a coworker from my grandmother's church visited his home and learned of his lifestyle, they preached the Gospel to him and urged him to learn to live as Jesus did. However, Brother Gu completely ignored that advice. He continued to regard his indulgent life as the very symbol of freedom, mistaking the perpetual pursuit of carnal pleasure as the path to success. He became an alcoholic, immersed in merriment—even after marriage he did not desist. Although later, under pressure from my grandmother, he began attending church weekly with his wife, his heart remained elsewhere. Once outside the sanctuary, he would justify his boisterous behavior with the “freedom of a man,” insisting that nothing he did was wrong.

However, while this life provided ephemeral satisfaction, every time night falls the indescribable loneliness—and the crushing void caused by sin—would crash over him like a tidal wave. When the clamor subsided and the lights went out, the emptiness within, devoured by sin, would only grow more intense. He realized that alcohol and laughter could only numb his senses for a short while; they could not fill the vast black hole in his heart. After each bout of revelry with friends, he felt even more exhausted and empty. Gradually, after worship and praise at church, he began to feel that he was unworthy of the preacher's teaching, even unworthy of the salvation offered through Jesus Christ. Yet he could never decide firmly between accepting salvation and clinging to his sin. For many years he maintained a tolerant attitude toward his sin, unwilling to repent fully. As soon as the service ended, he was lured by friends to various entertainments, burying his loneliness amid noise and alcohol. As Romans 6:21 NKJV says,

“What fruit did you have then from things now shameful? For the end of those things is death.” Now Brother Gu understands that the “carefree” life he once thought so exhilarating has ultimately led to spiritual exhaustion and bodily decay.



2. The Struggle After Repentance: The Tug of War Between Indulging the Flesh and Following the Spirit

(Battling sin and seeking God's mercy in weakness)

In his thirties, Brother Gu was involved in a serious car accident that landed him in the hospital—a turning point in his life. One night, a group of his friends (seeking to “look cool”) were street racing in the city, and he joined in. The car went out of control, and he was thrown from the vehicle, suffering multiple fractures and nearly losing his life. During his hospital stay, his wife stayed by his side every step of the way, while his old “gang” gradually disappeared one by one.

In that lonely hospital ward, he first wondered: What is it that I really live for? Is it for these superficial “friends,” or merely for momentary thrills? Was the freedom he had pursued for so long truly worth ending up half-alive like this? He recalled the Bible stories his grandmother used to tell him as a child—for instance, how Jesus said, “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” (Matthew 11:28 NKJV). So, lying in his hospital bed, he prayed silently: “If Jesus is truly my Savior, I am willing to try to believe Him.”

After being discharged, under my grandmother’s persistent urging, Brother Gu once again stepped into the church on a Sunday morning. When the pastor spoke of the contrast between “carnal mind” and “spiritual life” (as in Romans 8:6 NKJV, “For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.”), his heart was deeply moved. He came to realize that the pleasures he had pursued in his flesh would never grant him true peace or joy; continuing down that path would only lead to

physical and spiritual death. He understood that true life and peace could only be obtained by nurturing the Spirit and obeying God's will. In that moment, he decided to fully embrace Jesus Christ as his Savior, hoping to find genuine peace in God.

In the first few years after his conversion, Brother Gu actively participated in church activities and earnestly tried to change his lifestyle. Yet, the sinful tendencies of indulging the flesh clung to him like chains. He strove to quit drinking, though occasionally he still fell back; he attempted to stay clear of risky behaviors, but restlessness sometimes still gripped him. In church he was zealous—a “Sunday Christian” whose heart was on fire and spirit was moved by the Holy Spirit—but once he returned to his familiar environment, the old sinful habits would tighten around him again. Inside, he was torn: on the one hand, he longed to fully submit to God, and on the other, his weak will repeatedly led him to stumble. Each time he fell, he would curse himself—wondering why he could never fully repent. “Do I even deserve the Lord’s salvation?” he would ask himself.



3. The Bodily Consequences: Diseases as the Manifestation of Incomplete Repentance

(The price of sin is revealed in the body)

Despite his struggles with sin, Brother Gu could not completely break free from his previous lifestyle; consequently, the seeds of his past indulgences began to bear bitter fruit in his middle age. In his forties, he was diagnosed with high blood pressure, hyperlipidemia, and coronary heart disease. Doctors warned him that if he did not change his habits, he faced an imminent risk of heart disease. Though he tried to control his diet and quit

smoking and drinking, the emotional burdens and constant self-reproach often dragged him into bouts of depression. He felt as though he were trapped in a morass of sin, unable to extricate himself.

Finally, in his fifties, a sudden attack of angina sent him rushing to the emergency room. A severe narrowing of one of his coronary arteries was discovered, and he had to undergo immediate stent surgery to restore blood flow—otherwise, his life would be in peril. With great pain, he reflected on his past indulgences and incomplete repentance, realizing that they had placed his body in such dangerous jeopardy. After the surgery, his doctors explained, “Your long-term high blood pressure, abnormal blood lipids, and the emotional stress—combined with years of heavy drinking and indulgence—have seriously damaged your cardiovascular system.” My grandmother did not miss the chance to remark that now that he has come to faith, he should understand that his illnesses are the result of long-term neglect of repentance and self-examination; true healing can only begin from the healing of the soul, for which not even she can accomplish anything apart from the Lord’s guidance.

4. The Turning Point in Recovery: Complete Repentance, Renewing Life as It Was Meant to Be

(Submitting to God’s healing and embracing a new birth)

In the years following his physical recovery, Brother Gu gradually realized that true repentance is not merely an outward change in



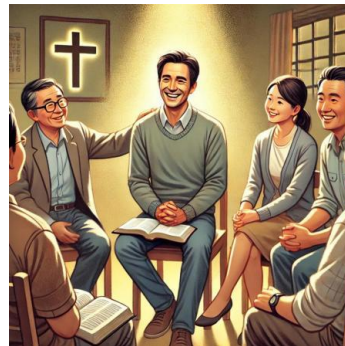
behavior but a complete, inward reliance on and submission to God. He resolved that in this next phase of his life, he would wholly repent—asking God to heal the emotional wounds and self-rejection that had long plagued him. He began spending more time each day in prayer and Bible study, diligently examining his inner self, and sharing in his small church group the struggles and bonds of sin he had once experienced. He understood that these pre-retirement years were a turning point

in his life—if he could now completely hand everything over to God, his life could be renewed to reflect the true form that it was meant to have.

5. A Call to Action: Keep Your Faith Pure and Your Repentance Complete

For many who are approaching retirement, life at this stage brings not only physical decline but also a new phase of inner reflection. Perhaps you have been a believer for many years yet still feel that true peace and fulfillment are missing from your life; or perhaps you often think about needing to fully repent, but feel overwhelmed by your own “weakness” and the chains that bind you. I want to tell you that now is an excellent turning point! Approaching retirement does not signal the onset of decline; rather, it is an opportunity granted by God for a new beginning. We must seize this opportunity to allow our hearts to attune more to the Holy Spirit—not permitting carnal desires or runaway emotions to continue holding us back. Complete repentance is not only about breaking free from the torment of sin; it is about allowing God to work anew in us, to heal the emotional wounds caused by sin, and to reshape our lives. As Romans 8:6 NKJV reminds us, “For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.”

Therefore, I would like to encourage all of you who are nearing or in retirement: repentance is not about proving to God that we can achieve perfection on our own—it is about clinging more tightly to Him. Let us bravely confront our past sins without self-condemnation or evasion, and



entrust everything to God. You will find that repentance is not an end, but rather a hopeful new beginning. No matter what your past may have been, every day is a chance to start anew. Spend time each day in quiet prayer, surrendering your inner weaknesses to the Lord, and share your journey with fellow believers so that you may mutually encourage one another. You will discover that true peace and freedom are not determined by

what we can achieve on our own but by our willingness to relinquish our burdens and receive the new life that Christ offers. May each of us, by the power of God, live out the life we were meant to live—a life of joy, hope, and vibrant witness.

Finally, I would like to say that Brother Gu's experience, though marked by twists and turns, is not an extraordinary tale. In many ways, it mirrors my own journey of faith with its ups and downs. And I suspect that the experiences of other brothers and sisters, while different in detail, are not fundamentally so divergent. Know that God's omnipotence "penetrates all things"; He is fully aware of everything we experience in this world and desires to choose many more people to follow Him over the storms of life. Therefore, dear brothers and sisters, our own capacities, even if we exhaust every resource, fall short of handling all the trivialities of life—only by turning completely toward God can we truly enjoy the peace and joy we are meant to have. Let us pray together for this!

Remember, it is not that we only come to realize that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit after we believe; rather, the Holy Spirit has given us our bodies so that through our words and actions we may bring glory to His name.

Circumcision of the Heart: Our Covenant with God

Introduction

In every age, integrity has been the foundation upon which people stand, and “covenants” serve as the basis for upholding that integrity. As Chinese proverbs say, “A gentleman’s word is his bond” and “Once spoken, a promise is not easily broken”—expressions that reflect the high value placed on keeping one’s word. In both Christianity and Judaism, the concept of “covenant” has always occupied a central place. For the Jewish people, circumcision is the outward mark of the covenant made with God—a symbol of the eternal covenant God promised to Abraham’s descendants.

However, the Christian faith teaches that through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ the covenant has been expanded, fulfilled, and renewed in a new way for all who trust in Him. Therefore, although Christians are no longer required to undergo a physical circumcision, they must always remember the sacred covenant they have with God. This is expressed as the “circumcision of the heart”—a sign of loyalty, obedience, and repentance toward God. It is the genuine imprint of the covenant between a believer’s inner soul and God, and it represents a life lived in true “keeping of one’s word.”

I. The Holy Covenant Between the Jewish People and God

In Jewish faith, circumcision is regarded as the sign of the covenant between God and Abraham and his descendants. Genesis 17 describes this process in detail:

“This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised... It shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you.” (Genesis 17:10–11, paraphrased)

Circumcision symbolizes the Jews’ obedience to and trust in God; it marks their entrance into God’s chosen people. Through circumcision, a clear boundary is set between the Jewish people and the nations. This rite is not merely a religious ceremony—it is a tangible expression of loyalty to the covenant with God. For Jews, circumcision is irreplaceable: it signifies not only the

physical purity of the body but also their inclusion as members of God's covenant people from birth.

Once circumcised, the Jewish people develop a deep sense of belonging and identity. They believe they have made an eternal covenant with God and become part of His chosen community. This inner transformation helps strengthen the unity and cohesion of the people, encouraging them to meticulously obey the law and the teachings. However, as the prophets have said, an outward circumcision alone does not guarantee complete obedience to God. As Deuteronomy 10:16 NKJV instructs:

“Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff-necked no longer.”

Thus, the external rite must be coupled with inner obedience and genuine repentance to truly please God.

II. The Christian Circumcision of the Heart: A Covenant Beyond the Flesh

Within Christian teaching, the concept of “circumcision of the heart” is thoroughly expounded by the Apostle Paul in the books of Romans and Colossians. Paul explains that although the physical circumcision was the symbol of the covenant with Abraham, the coming of Jesus Christ transformed the essence of that covenant. All who believe in Christ—whether Jew or Gentile—enter into a new covenant that no longer depends on a physical circumcision, but rather on the renewal of the heart and the practice of repentance. Through Paul's missionary journeys, the Gospel was widely spread among Gentiles, bringing the salvation of Jesus Christ to billions around the globe.

Paul emphasizes:

“nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter.” (Romans 2:28–29, NKJV paraphrased)

This indicates that Christians are not required to display their covenant with God by the physical rite of circumcision; instead, they must demonstrate their commitment to God through the circumcision of their hearts. In other words, the Christian faith is no longer confined to external observances, but centers on internal transformation and spiritual renewal.

Furthermore, the Old Testament already points toward a principle of circumcision of the heart. In addition to Deuteronomy 10:16, we read:

“And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.” (Deuteronomy 30:6, NKJV)

These scriptures reveal God’s expectation for His people: it is not enough to have a mere physical sign, but there must be inner purity and spiritual reformation. This is the very essence of the circumcision of the heart.

III. The Meaning of the Circumcision of the Heart: The Covenant Christians Must Not Forget

Although Christians are no longer bound by the rite of physical circumcision, this does not mean that they may be lax or indifferent in their spiritual lives. The circumcision of the heart represents a deeper covenant between the believer and God—a continuous act of inner repentance and submission. This “circumcision” calls on Christians to take their relationship with God seriously and to remember the following key principles:

1. Repentance and Obedience: The Core of the Circumcision of the Heart

The circumcision of the heart signifies deep, internal repentance and complete obedience to God. It requires believers to continually reflect upon their actions, to pray that the Holy Spirit may reveal their weaknesses and sins, and to return to God with a repentant spirit.

Importantly, this form of circumcision is not a one-time ceremony but a daily, ongoing spiritual discipline. Every day, we must open our hearts to God, pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and allow our thoughts and actions to be renewed. As 2 Corinthians 7:1 NKJV reminds us: “Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit...”

2. Keeping the Law and Fulfilling the Covenant: From Faith to Action

Although Christians are not bound by the Mosaic Law in the same way as traditional Jews, this does not mean that we can ignore God's moral standards. Jesus said in Matthew 5:17 NKJV: "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill."

This teaching shows that Christians must pursue God's righteousness, love, and truth from the depths of their hearts. The circumcision of the heart demands that believers obey God's law internally and live out these principles—loving God, loving others, pursuing justice, and treating others with kindness. These core values should guide every aspect of a Christian's life.

3. A Renewed Life: Becoming a New Creation in Christ

The ultimate aim of the circumcision of the heart is to transform us into new creations, renewed by the Holy Spirit and united with Christ. Through this inner transformation, we are no longer slaves to the law, but we live freely in Christ's grace and truth. As Colossians 2:11 NKJV declares: "In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ,"

IV. The Circumcision of the Heart and the Covenant Responsibility of Christians

The circumcision of the heart is a spiritual mark that continuously reminds Christians of their covenant with God. Although it lacks an outward physical form, its inner meaning is much deeper than that of physical circumcision. Christians must remember that, even without the physical sign, by virtue of the redemption through Christ they have been accepted as members of God's new covenant community. They are obligated to remain loyal to God and to revere Him, resisting the temptations of the secular world and the snares of sin, and faithfully keeping the covenant they have made with Him.

In other words, the absence of a physical circumcision does not mean that one may substitute it with any other external token. Christians must always remember that even though, by name, they are "Gentiles," through the redeeming work of Christ, they have been embraced as members of God's new covenant people.

This new identity brings not only God's grace but also the responsibility of the covenant. The essential meaning of this covenant is that we offer our "thoughts and intentions" as a sacrificial circumcision before God. This does not imply that we forgo using our intelligence; rather, it means that we must make God's commands and guidance the prerequisite for the exercise of our own will. This, then, is the essence of the circumcision of the heart.

Christians are called to continually examine their spiritual state through prayer, meditation, and Bible study, asking the Holy Spirit to purify our hearts so that we may walk daily in God's will. The final expression of the circumcision of the heart is a life of holiness, where purity and justice guide our every action.

A Call to Remember the Importance of the Circumcision of the Heart

As Christians, though we are no longer bound by the ritual of physical circumcision, we have entered into an even deeper covenant with God—a covenant that demands continual repentance, complete obedience, and the active response of both faith and works to God's grace. The circumcision of the heart represents an inner renewal; it is the true mark of our covenant relationship with God.

Dear brothers and sisters, may we always remember our "circumcision of the heart." Let us not forget the covenant we have with God, nor allow worldly views or the temptations of sin to lead us astray. When we are weary and weak, may the Lord, by the power of the Holy Spirit, renew us. Let us steadfastly hold on to this spiritual circumcision, living a life marked by holiness and justice, and bear witness as God's sanctified people.

Please, brothers and sisters, join together in prayer for this cause!

Revisiting “Mountains and Rivers Differ, Yet the Wind and Moon Are Under the Same Sky”: What Does It Mean?

In recent years, the phrase “Mountains and Rivers Differ, Yet the Wind and Moon Are Under the Same Sky” has been invoked anew. This expression conveys the sentiment that even when people of different nations and ethnicities live apart, they still share the same sky and, in doing so, share a common destiny and resonance. As recorded in *The Biography of the Tang Dahe Expedition to the East*, it is said:

“Prince Nagaya of Japan, who greatly revered Buddhism, (had) created a thousand kasaya robes, and sent them to gift the great virtuous monks of this country. On the kasaya there were embroidered four lines saying, “Though our mountains and rivers differ, the wind and moon are under the same sky. To all the Buddha’s children, let us join our destinies together.”

This classic phrase originates from the historical and cultural exchanges between China and Japan, as well as from Buddhist interactions during the Sui-Tang period. It is attributed to the famous Japanese statesman Prince Nagaya and expresses the hope that revered Chinese monks would go to Japan to transmit Buddhism.

In February 2020, the Japan Chinese Proficiency Test organization once again used these eight characters on the outer packaging of donated supplies to Hubei, signaling that in today’s complex Sino-Japanese relations, this sentiment remains profoundly relevant. Although there remains a lingering resentment from modern history, if we can overcome hatred, learn from each other’s strengths, and turn our attention to self-improvement, we may truly achieve personal transcendence and national rejuvenation.



It is much like two swordsmen dueling: if one is injured, it does not mean that everything the other has done is inherently wrong. If the injured one wallows in hatred and curses fate, he loses his calm and clarity of judgment. A truly skilled swordsman, on the other hand, while reflecting on his own failures, will keenly observe his opponent's techniques, learn from their subtle insights, integrate them, and constantly hone his own skills—ultimately reaching new heights.

For today's China, this is equally true. Especially when viewed through the dual lenses of traditional Chinese culture and Christian faith, we should harness the power of forgiveness, reflection, and self-examination to break free from the shackles of historical enmity, moving instead toward reconciliation and development. This article explores how to ease anti-Japanese sentiments from a primarily Christian perspective—with traditional Chinese cultural insights as a complement—by drawing lessons from Japan's postwar rebirth, thereby enhancing self-improvement and achieving true national rejuvenation.

I. Forgiveness and Love in Christianity: From Hatred to Transcendence

The Bible commands us to “love your neighbor as yourself,” a core teaching given by Jesus to His disciples. He calls us not only to love those with whom we live in harmony but also those who have hurt us:

“But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,” (Matthew 5:44 NKJV).

This teaching calls for both outward forgiveness and an inner departure from hatred, leading ultimately to genuine reconciliation and love. For many Chinese facing Japan's

historical aggression, deep-seated resentment is understandable. However, the Bible reminds us that hatred cannot bring true resolution—only forgiveness can bestow genuine inner peace. Jesus’ words provide redemption not just for past wounds but also set an expectation for the future. Only by forgiving can we create a pathway to reconciliation for ourselves and for society. It is important to note that emphasizing forgiveness does not mean forgetting; it means choosing not to let hatred control our future. Such forgiveness is not a sign of weakness but a profound inner strength that transcends animosity. As Romans 12:2b NKJV exhorts, “be transformed by the renewing of your mind...” These teachings help us step out from the shadows of history and, through forgiveness and love, develop a broader vision and a deeper sense of life’s meaning.

II. Tolerance and Reflection in Traditional Chinese Culture: Pursuing Inner Peace

Chinese traditional culture has long upheld the value of “unity in diversity” and emphasizes that solutions must be sought from within. The Confucian ideal of “cultivate oneself, regulate the family, govern the state, bring peace to the world” reminds us to start with self-reflection and self-improvement—so that ultimately peace and harmony in family and nation are achieved. When confronting the historical issues between China and Japan, we should not only reflect on the pain of the past but also transcend rivalry through self-enhancement.

Confucius taught in the *Analects*, “Do not do to others what you do not want done to yourself.” This shares a common thread with the Christian principle of “love your neighbor as yourself.” In addressing historical issues, we should avoid sinking into a mire of hatred. Instead, through tolerance and reflection, we can reframe Sino-Japanese relations.

Chinese traditional culture also emphasizes self-examination—a vital approach to dispelling anti-Japanese sentiments. The ancients often said, “I examine myself three times a day,” reminding us to continuously reflect on whether our words and actions are appropriate. In doing so, we can not only heal from historical wounds but also cultivate an inner peace that paves the way for reconciliation. As Confucius noted, “Virtue is never left

alone; it always has neighbors.” By uplifting ourselves, we better connect with the world and ultimately achieve real national rejuvenation.

III. Learning from Japan’s Postwar Rebirth: Reflecting on Pain and Improving Oneself

Japan’s remarkable recovery after World War II—transforming from ruins into the world’s second-largest economy—offers many lessons that China can learn from. After suffering devastating losses in the war, Japan chose to let go of hatred and focused on economic reconstruction, technological development, and educational reform. For China to achieve self-transcendence, it too must engage in rational reflection and self-improvement, drawing on Japan’s postwar experience. Turning one’s focus inward and prioritizing the well-being of the people—thereby improving the standard and quality of life—is essential.

1. Profound Reflection and the Pursuit of a Peaceful Constitution:

After the war, Japan underwent deep self-reflection and charted a new course for national development. By reconsidering its militaristic past and embracing a “peace constitution,” Japan shifted its focus to economic recovery and technological innovation. This process of reflection and repositioning embodies the ancient Chinese adage, “Learn from history to know the rise and fall of nations.” For China, the lesson is to draw from historical experiences—avoiding excessive emotional confrontation while focusing on building the future. In national development strategy, fostering peace and cooperation can help shape a more open and confident national image.

2. Long-Term Investment in Education and Technology:

Japan’s ascent was greatly aided by its postwar investments in education and technology. By reforming its educational system and prioritizing research and innovation, Japan nurtured a globally competitive workforce. This echoes the Chinese tradition of lifelong learning, epitomized by the saying “Study without ceasing, teach without tiring.” To surpass Japan, China must not only achieve breakthroughs in economic growth but also commit enduring efforts to education and technological innovation. The focus should be on nurturing innovative talent and advancing

high-tech industries, rather than simply having hard-earned talent work in low-wage jobs. Chinese culture has always stressed the principle of “unity of knowledge and action”—knowledge must be translated into productivity. This dedication to innovation and order across industries is key to genuine self-transcendence.

3. International Cooperation and Cultural Exchange: Embracing a Global Vision

Through active participation in international affairs and global economic cooperation, Japan gradually restored its international image. Similarly, China should adopt an open and pragmatic diplomatic policy to engage with the global community. The Chinese adage “Help others to stand as well as yourself” implies that we must focus not only on our own development but also on promoting global common prosperity. By engaging in international cooperation and cultural exchange, China can learn from other advanced nations and raise its international influence. Achieving national rejuvenation through global collaboration will not only create more development opportunities but also enhance China’s voice in world affairs.



IV. Humble Learning and Transcendence: Forgiveness and Self-Reflection as the Way to Revival

Whether in the forgiving spirit of Christianity or in the self-examining wisdom of Chinese traditional culture, the key to alleviating anti-Japanese sentiments lies in learning from history and moving beyond it. We should approach Japan and other

developed nations with humility and learn from their postwar experiences, avoiding the pitfalls of emotional confrontation.

Let it be clear that forgiveness does not imply weakness; rather, it fosters a stronger inner confidence. People must improve themselves and focus on the long-term development of education, technology, and culture, to truly achieve self-transcendence. This is not only a responsibility to history but also a hopeful outlook for the future. Our generation should not merely recount tales of hatred but share our experiences of how we rose again.

V. Focusing on Democracy and People's Livelihood: Constructing a Foundation for Long-Term Development

In the process of national rejuvenation, besides economic growth, every sector must pay close attention to democracy and people's livelihood, as these areas directly affect the long-term development potential of a country. Democracy is not only a form of political participation; it is also a means for every individual to find a place in society and to fully realize their personal value. Strengthening democracy helps to gather collective wisdom and encourages a plurality of ideas, rather than forcing uniformity that stifles individual innovation.

Likewise, issues such as healthcare, education, housing, and employment directly determine the quality of life for the people. A strong nation must ensure that all citizens enjoy basic life security and development opportunities—not simply let other countries reap the dividends that come from the sweat of the Chinese people. Through persistent reform in these fields, ensuring fairness and stability, the nation can sustain long-term growth.

VI. The Key to Transcendence: Focus on What Is in Front of You

Whether facing competition with Japan or the challenges brought by globalization, Chinese people should fundamentally work to improve themselves, concentrate on their immediate tasks, and avoid inflicting harm on each other from the ground up. Beginning with cultivating healthy crops and vegetables, producing high-quality foods, and treating every patient with care—show compassion to fellow citizens who, like you, belong to society's base. It is only by using our love and diligence to break

the chains of capitalist and political interests that we lay the true foundation for national rejuvenation. Through the efforts of each Chinese citizen—by raising living standards and optimizing social structure—we will pave the way for our nation’s future rise. Let us no longer be blinded by historical hatred; instead, we must drive progress through concrete actions, focusing on the here and now and continuously improving our quality of life and professional competence to purify our environment.

Conclusion: From Hatred to Self-Transcendence

Have you noticed that during the COVID-19 period in China, the Japanese once again invoked the phrase “Mountains and Rivers Differ, Yet the Wind and Moon Are Under the Same Sky”? Perhaps, from another angle, it reflects the possibility that after more than 70 years following the war, Japan—having experienced the enormous benefits of economic development and rising living standards—willingly reminds us how to face our common past, confront the urgent challenges of the present, and build a promising future for all.

Although China and Japan have different histories and cultural backgrounds, the shared destiny of all humanity binds our two nations closely together. The Chinese people should, drawing on both the spirit of forgiveness and the self-reflective wisdom of traditional culture, emerge from the shadows of historical enmity and instead learn from Japan’s postwar success, improving our own qualities in the process and achieving genuine self-transcendence.

Facing the wounds of history, hatred is not the only answer. A more confident and powerful nation is built by each individual optimizing their environment. Respect from other countries is earned not by throwing money around but by improving one’s own living standards and quality of life—utopian dreams are never our choice. Personal interests and freedom are paramount; without these, any other discussion is mere empty talk.

Let us pray together for this cause!

Watch Out for Satan's Schemes, Break Free from Refined Selfishness, and Live Out Christ's Call!

Dear brothers and sisters, let us consider a question: Have you noticed that both online and offline we are increasingly witnessing a prevailing atmosphere of self-protection, refined selfishness, and indifference toward others? The internet is full of strategies promoting “self-contained virtue,” with short videos constantly conveying these approaches—warning people not to “pay the price” for their passion. What may seem like wise personal self-preservation is, in fact, a last-ditch tactic that finds no true solution to our real-world problems. Behind it lies a hidden indifference toward others and an escape from facing reality. Conversely, everyone is also suffering from others’ indifference. When disaster strikes, one will come to deeply experience that such widespread coldness only breeds mutual harm in society.

Many people are no longer willing to speak out for those in distress; instead, they concentrate all their energy on satisfying and protecting themselves. This phenomenon is pervasive throughout society. On a macro level, we see it in the dense smog that fills our skies, chemical residues seeping into people’s food supplies, cases of disappearances, organ trafficking, and even women being chained—incidents left unresolved that cause great sorrow. In everyday life, during food and vegetable cultivation and processing, if it is not for one’s own consumption, safety and sanitation are trampled underfoot; even government officials do not question such practices. At work, colleagues often merely avoid interfering with one another, showing little interest in each other’s growth and development; in social settings, friendships become distant and are predominantly based on personal gain; and within families, many individuals care little for even their closest kin, only caring about what benefits they can personally extract. Regrettably, such a state of affairs is found even among Christians who have left the church, and perhaps even more so.

Discord within the Church

As Christians, we are called to love one another and to be the light and salt of the world. Yet many believers have been deceived by Satan’s cunning, adopting worldly methods in their actions. It is not uncommon to see indifference and helplessness when confronted with the issues mentioned above—even within the church, the attitude toward the spiritual growth of fellow believers is one of apathy. When a brother shares his journey of life and spiritual transformation, he may be met with indifferent responses or even criticism and judgment from other Christians. Some people remain skeptical of others’ expressions of faith, dismissing their spiritual experiences as shallow emotional impulses, and even using their own theological knowledge to criticize others from a superior vantage. These discordant phenomena are precisely the result of Satan exploiting the pride and selfishness in our hearts. Many, including Christians, often view Satan as a tangible demon; in reality, Satan more fully represents the inner thoughts and attitudes that counter God’s leading. When our hearts are filled with pride, selfishness, indifference, and judgment toward others, Satan’s schemes succeed in our midst—dimming a light that might otherwise shine in this society of mutual harm.

Consider the scene described in the Gospel of John:

“Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments and made four parts, to each soldier a part, and also the tunic. Now the tunic was without seam, woven from the top in one piece. They said therefore among themselves, “Let us not tear it, but cast lots



for it, whose it shall be,” that the Scripture might be fulfilled which says: “They divided My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots.” Therefore the soldiers did these things.” (John 19:23–24, NKJV) Observe these soldiers—and compare them to some Christians today whose handling of

matters involving personal interests appears no different. They focus solely on immediate gains, failing to recognize the true value of faith. Even in modern society, many view their faith merely as a tool to satisfy personal needs and desires; yet this attitude causes them to lose a genuine relationship with God. Just as the soldiers callously divided Jesus' garments, many believers in church and social life may exhibit indifference and selfishness toward others, even refusing to engage in mutual support and care.



Drawing on the symbolism of this passage, we can reflect on our own attitude toward faith: Are we, like the soldiers, focused only on immediate gains while ignoring the sacrifice and teaching of Jesus? As Christians, we are part of society and face the very same social and personal issues. But let us not forget that the true value of our faith offers us an opportunity to reject refined selfishness and return to Christ's call—a chance to fulfill the command to love one another in both word and deed.

The Consequences of Adopting Worldly Methods

When Christians adopt worldly ways, they stray from God's path and the freedom that Jesus offers. In doing so, they effectively set aside—and sometimes even reject—the spiritual authority bestowed upon them. Satan exploits our natural instinct for self-protection by packaging secular values as seemingly sound philosophies, luring believers away from the teachings of Christ. It is much like the proverb about pigs: "But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: "A dog returns to his own

vomit,”” This saying (as found in 2 Peter 2:22, NKJV paraphrased) is fitting for those who, after cleansing themselves superficially, fall right back into their old ways. The consequence is that we invite more trouble and long-term fallout.

Specifically:

1. A self-centered attitude leads to isolation and inner emptiness. When we focus solely on our own interests and neglect others, we gradually lose genuine connections with those around us. Relationships become superficial—even within the church, true friends and support may be scarce. This isolation breeds further anxiety and insecurity because we forgo the warmth of mutual love.

2. A judgmental and proud attitude leads to inner turmoil and spiritual stagnation. When we regard other brothers and sisters with criticism and arrogance, our own hearts drift further from God’s grace. Blinded by pride, we fail to see our own shortcomings, thus losing the opportunity for God’s correction and transformation. Over time, this attitude causes our spiritual life to stagnate, perhaps even leading to a state of indifference and estrangement from God.

3. Relying solely on one’s own strength to face life’s challenges leaves us mired in unending pressure and worry. Secular methods teach us to struggle for success and security on our own; however, this often reveals our limitations and weaknesses, eventually plunging us into ceaseless anxiety and fatigue—and such conditions can become a source of physical ailments.

The Advantages of Relying on God

In contrast, when we choose to relinquish our pride and self-protection and to depend on God’s guidance, we begin to see life filled with divine grace and blessing. Relying on God allows us to find true peace and comfort. Consider the following:

1. **Relying on God Provides Spiritual Comfort and Strength:**

When we entrust all our burdens to the Lord, He grants us a peace beyond human understanding. As Philippians 4:6–7 NKJV states, “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all

understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” This peace is a unique blessing from God, available only to those who trust in Him.

2. Relying on God Enables Us to Face Life’s Turmoil with Calm:

In our competitive and pressure-filled world, challenges are inevitable. Yet when we depend on God, our hearts remain unshaken by external circumstances. We know that whatever lies ahead, God is with us. As the Psalmist writes in Psalm 23:4 NKJV, “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.” Trusting in God enables us to face challenges with composure, free from panic over external changes.

3. Relying on God Empowers Us to Truly Love One Another: Recognizing that everything comes from God, we cease to cling obsessively to personal gain and instead freely share love and grace with others. The church then becomes a large family filled with mutual care and support, where each brother and sister finds spiritual encouragement. As Jesus instructed in John 13:34 NKJV, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.” This mutual love not only grows our individual spiritual lives but also glorifies God throughout the entire community.

Conclusion: Return to Christ’s Call

Satan’s cunning lies in convincing us that refined selfishness and a “mind solely on self” are wise choices. Yet such choices lead us away from God’s love and grace. As Christians, we must stay alert—not letting the trends of the world sway us—but instead stand firmly, relying on God to live out His calling. In loving one another, supporting each other in faith, and growing together, we become the light and salt of the world, testifying to God’s glory.



May every Christian cast aside worldly standards, return to Christ's embrace, love and support one another, and live out a life that stands in stark contrast to the world. Under God's guidance, may we find true peace and joy, face every challenge with courage and grace, and live each moment in the light of His promises of abundant life.

During the pandemic, mandatory nucleic acid testing inflicted relentless suffering on countless individuals and families, disrupting livelihoods with harms far outweighing benefits—akin to "ninety-nine oxen versus a single hair" in its lopsided imbalance. Yet the unyielding resolve behind policies like "no test, no mobility"—which paralyzed daily life—holds a paradoxical lesson for Christians: such ironclad determination to resist compromise is precisely what believers must cultivate to thwart Satan's schemes and dismantle the soul-corrosive grip of self-serving individualism.

Dear brothers and sisters, let us pray together for this, that we might remain steadfast in our faith, break free from self-centered living, and truly live out the calling of Christ!

How Should Disciples Understand the Distinctive Rule of Law Under the Kingdom of God?

Introduction

Today we address a topic that may seem distant yet is right before our eyes. Many do not understand numerous terms modified by “Chinese-style socialism” (such as the Constitution, rule of law, path, culture, system, and theoretical framework), whose meanings differ greatly from their unmodified forms. Today, we focus on the rule of law—that is, the rule of law under Chinese socialism—and its relationship to “rule by man.” Among the Christian community, there is sometimes another view that Chinese-style socialism (plus these terms) appears to be in tension with the Biblical concept of authority, thereby producing potential cognitive conflicts in everyday life and work. Here, for the sake of harmonious discussion, we offer an explanation.

Since its introduction, Chinese-style socialist rule of law has developed around the goal of “governing the country by law.” In this system, “rule by man” and the rule of law coexist, complementing each other even as certain tensions exist. In China—as in any society—the rule of law and “rule by man” have always been present. Why is that? Rule of law reflects the universal aspect of “rule by man”: as an institutionalized means to maintain order and govern society. Meanwhile, “rule by man” reveals the particularity and political purpose of the ruling group; especially in critical decisions, or where the will of the ruler intervenes strongly, the law is often influenced by individual power. Therefore, to truly understand the essence of Chinese-style socialist rule of law, one must comprehend how these two interact, which in turn helps us grasp the relationship between God’s authority and the workings of Satan in this context.

I. From the Qin Dynasty to the Present: “Rule by Man” and Rule of Law in Chinese History

1. The Qin Dynasty: The Combination of Harsh Legalism and “Rule by Man”

Guided by Legalist thought, the Qin Dynasty implemented strict rule of law and established the principle of “governing the country by law” through the reforms of Shang Yang. Emperor Qin Shi Huang maintained central power by enforcing laws, requiring all citizens to abide by them. Yet, in essence, the Qin legal system was an embodiment of the emperor’s personal will—the imprint of “rule by man” was very strong. Although law emphasized universal rules and order, its actual implementation depended on the ruler’s decisions and personal authority. This serves as an important example of the coexistence of the universality of law and the particularity of rule by man.



Advantage: It was a powerful means to unify the nation and quickly establish an efficient political order.

Disadvantage: It lacked human compassion and overly concentrated power, leading to accumulated social tensions; the Qin Dynasty collapsed swiftly and disastrously, illustrating that even great achievements can be tarnished when overemphasis is placed on the ruler’s will.

2. The Han and Tang Dynasties: The Coexistence of Rule of Law and Moral Governance

In the Han and Tang periods, both rule of law and moral governance were emphasized, as seen in the Han dynasty’s lenient policies and the Tang legal code (*Tang Lü Shuyi*). Under this framework, the law, as a tool for maintaining order, ensured the enforcement of social rules, yet the emperor’s personal will still prevailed over the law. The implementation of the law was subject to personal judgment— reflecting the special element of “rule by man” or the flexibility of the law.

Advantage: The legal system gradually became more complete, balancing social stability with flexible governance.

Disadvantage: The enforcement of the law largely depended on the emperor's virtue and judgment, lacking long-term institutional guarantees.

3. The Ming and Qing Dynasties: Primacy of “Rule by Man” Under Autocratic Rule

During the Ming and Qing periods, the law was used primarily as a tool to maintain monarchic autocracy, with “rule by man” prevailing over the rule of law. Although the Ming had the *Great Ming Code* and the Qing had the *Great Qing Code*, these laws served as extensions of imperial power. The ruler's will often superseded the law. This illustrates the coexistence of the universal character of the law with the particularity of rule by man: while laws are widely applicable, their real application depended greatly on the center of power.

Advantage: The legal system was relatively complete and contributed to maintaining order during times of relative peace.

Disadvantage: The overbearing influence of the emperor's personal will restricted the independence and universality of the law, leading to corruption and abuse of power.

4. Contemporary China: Chinese-Style Socialist Rule of Law

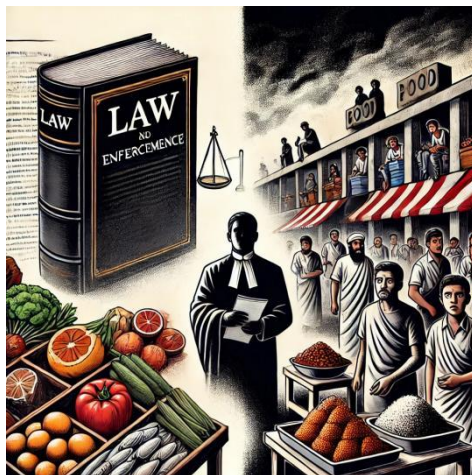
Since the founding of New China, the country's leadership has been gradually transitioning from “rule by man” towards a rule of law, eventually reaching a more balanced state today. For instance, on August 21, 1958, at an expanded Politburo meeting in Beidaihe, Mao Zedong remarked, “The law itself is fine, but we have our own way.” He added, “...our regulations—90% are formulated by the departments—are not primarily maintained by the civil and criminal laws; rather, we rely on resolutions and meetings, held about four times a year, not on the civil or criminal law to maintain order.” Liu Shaoqi also commented: “Is it rule of law or rule by man? It appears that in reality, we depend on individuals; the law can only serve as a reference.” (See, for example, the 2012 article on the National People's Congress website: “The Historical Development and Recent Achievements of Our Civil Legislation.”)

Since the Reform and Opening Up, China has been steadily advancing the “rule of law” with the aim of governing the country by law, forming a relatively complete legal system. However, China’s legal system is intertwined with the leadership of the Party. This interplay between the rule of law and rule by man is evident: while the law generally governs society, the Party’s leadership means that the particularity of “rule by man” continues—especially in key political and economic areas, where legal interpretation and enforcement often depend on the judgments of leaders or Party organizations. This is not to be seen in a negative light but rather as a necessary reality of contemporary politics.

In some practical cases, when “rule by man” fails to speak out, the law becomes a mere ornament, leading to significant social problems. For example, issues of food safety are a typical case. Even though laws explicitly prohibit the production and sale of toxic or harmful foods, such products still flourish in the market, causing severe harm to society and consumers. On the surface, the law has clearly set rules and penalties; yet its enforcement lacks effectiveness. This indicates that without clear pronouncements from “rule by man,” the law’s implementation may be ignored or rendered ineffective. Such phenomena reflect the particularity of “rule by man”: the operation of the law depends not only on the system but also on the intervention and drive of power. In other words, if leaders do not speak, the system cannot function properly—if no leader speaks out, even whispers are seen as mere rumors, and the system cannot work.

Advantage: Chinese-style rule of law is closely integrated with the nation’s development strategy, ensuring continuous development and stability.

Disadvantage: The independence of the law is limited, and in some cases the rule of law is seen as an extension of “rule by man,” leading to inadequate enforcement—especially in matters of public safety and social welfare, where negligence in enforcement is evident.



II. The American Practice of Rule of Law: Checks on Power and Judicial Independence

In contrast to China, the American legal system is built upon the principles of the separation of powers and judicial independence. The Constitution establishes the separation of the three branches of government, and the universal application of the law is free from individual or partisan control. This structure renders American law highly stable. However, because the law there can be less flexible in addressing a complex political environment, its rigidity may occasionally hinder rapid reform. Compared to China, American rule of law is more insulated from the personal will of rulers but may lack the nimbleness to respond swiftly in times of crisis.

Advantage: The law is highly independent, preventing abuses of power, and ensuring broad protection of citizens' rights.

Disadvantage: The legal system can be relatively inflexible; political conflicts and interest group struggles may make legal procedures excessively lengthy and slow down reforms.

III. A Comparison Between Chinese and American Rule of Law: Different Intertwining of Power and Law

A comparison of the rule of law in China and the United States reveals the following:

1. In China, the rule of law and “rule by man” coexist. The rule of law functions as a set of universal rules serving the political objectives of the Party and state, while “rule by man” is

evident in the flexibility with which laws are interpreted and enforced—especially in key decision-making processes that depend on the judgment of leaders.

2. In the United States, the rule of law emphasizes independence. The system of checks and balances ensures that the law is not influenced by any individual, allowing its universality to stand firm. However, the rigidity of the law in the U.S. means that it may be slow to respond in extraordinary political situations.

(This topic is not the main focus today and will be briefly noted here.)

IV. How Should Disciples (Christians) Correctly Understand Chinese-Style Socialist Rule of Law?

For Chinese Christians, it is especially important to understand the essence of Chinese-style socialist rule of law. As Romans 13:1 NKJV instructs, Christians are to submit to governing authorities because, “Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.” The coexistence of the rule of law and “rule by man” reflects not only the complexity of societal governance but also provides the basis for Christians to obey state laws. In such an environment where the rule of law and “rule by man” coexist, Christians should respect the universality of the law and understand that in certain situations the enforcement of the law may involve a degree of flexibility and particularity.

Christians can correctly understand the relationship between the rule of law and “rule by man” by focusing on two points:

1. Understanding the Political Intentions Behind the Law:

China’s legal system is inseparable from Party leadership. The universality of the law serves the long-term development of the country; therefore, Christians should respect and submit to the law and live out their faith within the confines of the legal framework.

2. Living Out One’s Faith Amid the Coexistence of Rule of Law and “Rule by Man”:

Christians should recognize that in every society, “rule by man” and the rule of law will inevitably coexist. In our daily lives, we must find a balance—respecting the legal system while remaining faithful to the principles of our faith.

Disciple of Christ need to be aware that the rule of law is aimed at maintaining social order. Under the Chinese socialist system, the rule of law also reflects the governance rules dictated by the country’s political system, with “rule by man” representing the role of power in the execution process. As Christians, we know that God’s authority is above any human power structure. Whether under the rule of law or “rule by man,” all operate under God’s dominion. When God acts as the true “law” in our hearts, His governing principles form the foundation for our nation’s development. Conversely, when people violate that “law,” it becomes a tool for Satan to distract us with self-interest, causing the country to stray from its proper course.

Therefore, Christians should not assume that politics is irrelevant to them. Every word and action falls within either God’s or Satan’s domain. Our choices determine the pattern of the nation under “God’s rule.” Do not complain about your circumstances; instead, diligently rely on the Lord’s guidance. A person who faithfully obeys God’s commandments will be able to face everything in this world calmly and fend off outside interference.

V. Conclusion: Seeing God’s Work in the Coexistence of Rule of Law and “Rule by Man”

Chinese-style socialist rule of law reflects a dialectical unity between rule of law and “rule by man.” Under the universality of law, there still exists a particularity of “rule by man,” especially when it comes to national strategy and key political decisions. This unique legal system calls on Chinese citizens, especially Christians, to understand this interplay and to



respect the legal system in everyday life, while remaining clear-eyed and steadfast in their faith.

The rule of law and “rule by man” are not opposing concepts but are interdependent. By understanding this, Christians can better submit to the law and, in the tension between state and faith, find a home for their souls—becoming the light and the salt in society and continuously bringing glory to the Kingdom under God’s rule.

Let us all pray together for this cause!

Casual Reflections on Inner Struggles and Life's Joy: Say You, Say Me, Say It Together

Leo Tolstoy's Anna Karenina famously begins, "Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way." I would like to add: a happy family may not necessarily know God—or only for a time—but an unhappy family certainly lacks true reverence for God and genuine repentance.

True joy in life is not merely a reflection of our external circumstances; it originates from the feelings within our hearts. When a person's heart becomes filled with secrets, guilt, and repression, the brilliant joy once akin to a radiant sunset will gradually vanish without our conscious notice. The failure to be open and sincere with others—and even with ourselves—often marks the beginning of lost joy. Our relationships with friends and family gradually become distant, and even among colleagues we may start to hide our true selves. This is not only an individual experience; it is shared by many. In the process of closing ourselves off, the loss of genuine dialogue makes life feel mechanical and isolated, filling our inner world with an inescapable sense of guilt and burden.

1. The Loss of Honesty and Sincerity: Rebuilding Connection with Others and with Oneself

Human relationships are like bridges, or like the neurons that link together snippets of memory in our minds—they need trust, understanding, and sincere communication to be sustained. When secrets, barriers, or even deception replace honest dialogue, that bridge begins to crumble.

When you realize that you are no longer able to be open with your family or friends—or when you hide those unspeakable truths deep within—you may slowly become isolated. You might fear that they will not understand or accept your feelings, and so you choose to avoid the topic. However, such avoidance does nothing to mend relationships; instead, it only deepens the divide between you and others and between you and yourself.

To rebuild these connections, the first step is to acknowledge your inner feelings honestly. No matter how complex or painful

those feelings may be, only by confronting them directly can you move toward true release. As the Bible says, “And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (John 8:32 NKJV). Start with small, manageable disclosures—there is no need to unload all your burdens at once. Gradually restoring honest communication with your family and building genuine daily dialogue will help you slowly emerge from isolation.



2. Inner Guilt and Christian Faith: Seeking Forgiveness and Peace

In life, each of us sometimes feels that we have wronged our family or even ourselves. These feelings often arise from actions that seem beyond repair—excessive drinking, emotional misdirection, bitter quarrels, and so on. Such behaviors not only inflict pain on our loved ones but also create a profound conflict with our own faith.

Guilt can bind us like an invisible shackle, hindering our relationship with God and preventing our hearts from experiencing true peace. As Christians, we understand that these actions are, at their core, sinful, and sin slowly erodes our souls and robs us of life’s joy.

Yet the power of faith lies in the liberation brought by forgiveness and repentance. God, through the sacrifice of Christ, has taken upon Himself the penalty for our sin. You do not need to continue bearing that burden of guilt. As the Bible declares, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9 NKJV). Through repentance and prayer, pour out your heart to God and ask for His forgiveness, so that the grace of pardon may re-enter your life and bring you true peace.

3. The Sense of Helplessness in the Social Environment: Accepting Reality and Finding Your Way

We live in a world filled with challenges—many issues are simply beyond our control. The current state of society, systemic contradictions, and the overwhelming sense of powerlessness when facing injustice can leave us feeling lost and resigned.

Yet, within this complex world, you have a choice: find your own place and distinguish between what you can control and what you cannot. Through faith, you can commit the uncontrollable to God while focusing on those things that you can change—for instance, improving your relationships with family or living out Christ’s teachings in everyday life.

As we age, our inner world often grows more closed, particularly when we become less outgoing or forthright. Being introverted is not a flaw—the key is to find the inner tranquility and joy that can still reside within. Solitude can become a source of strength for reflection. Prayer is an excellent way to achieve this; it is not only a means of communicating with God, but also a way to converse with one’s own self. Through prayer, you can lay down your inner burdens and discover a calm that allows your heart to be filled with joy once again.



4. Rediscovering Joy Through Christian Faith

From a faith perspective, joy is a condition that arises from deep within, intrinsically linked to our relationship with God. When our connection with God is fractured, guilt and sin quickly rob us of our joy. But through repentance and the restoration of our faith, we can reclaim inner serenity.

As the Bible teaches, “Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!” (Philippians 4:4 NKJV). Joy is not merely a fleeting moment; it is an ongoing process. By repenting and praying, you can gradually release the guilt that weighs on your heart and reconnect with God, allowing your faith to become the central source of joy in your life.

A Final Blessing: Rediscovering the Lost Joy Through Faith

Often, our unhappiness stems from the conflict between our inner selves and the world around us. Yet through faith, you can find the inner peace and calm needed to face life’s challenges. Whether dealing with relationships with family and friends or confronting societal difficulties, Christian faith provides you with strength and direction.

Through sincere communication, heartfelt repentance, and earnest prayer, you can gradually let go of inner guilt, rebuild honest relationships with those around you, and rediscover the meaning and joy of life in your faith. This reflection is not aimed at any one person or group—it is called “Say You, Say Me, Say It Together” because joy is not a fleeting experience; it is a continuous journey meant for everyone. Through faith and inner transformation, you can slowly overcome your current struggles and reclaim the long-lost joy.

Finally, regardless of your age, the country you live in, or your position in society—even if you have faced great hardships—every stage of life holds new hope and opportunity. Every person’s story contains pain and struggle, but these very experiences shape us, granting us the courage and strength to face the days ahead. Whether facing personal challenges or societal pressures, Christian faith can serve as the pillar of support in your heart. As Scripture declares, “He gives power to the weak, And to those who have no might He increases strength.” (Isaiah 40:29 NKJV). So, be courageous and uplift your spirit! Your future remains full of possibilities; faith and a steadfast heart will guide you toward a brighter tomorrow.

Let us pray together for this!

Attached Poem: **“The Bridge of the Heart”**

Walls of secrecy build so high, Truth and sincerity drift away in silence. Lonely shadows slowly lengthen, While the once vibrant joy fades into quiet distance.

As bridges crumble amid barriers, Only honesty can mend the severed ties. Seek out the warm light through repentance, And find on faith's shore the peace that never dies.

Guilt wraps around the heart like chains, Yet prayer allows our soul to rest and mend. The glow of forgiveness pierces the night, And faith ignites hope that will never end.

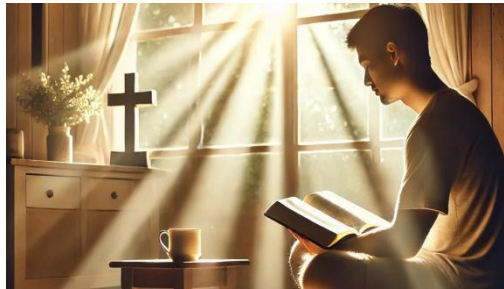
No matter your age or where you're from, Every heart holds the power to move ahead. After every storm, the sun will shine again, With faith to guide the way and light the path to hope.

For Whom Is the Conduit of the Heart Laid?

“Jesus answered him, ‘The first of all the commandments is: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment.”

(Mark 12:29–31, NKJV)

As Christians who have believed in the Lord for many years, we are all very familiar with this passage—and many of us strive daily to live out the call to love God and love others. Yet, despite our earnest efforts to do good and pursue holiness, we sometimes find ourselves overwhelmed, especially as life changes and the years pass by. In such moments, complaints and doubts quietly arise: “I have tried so hard to depend on God; why does He not grant me a peaceful and smooth life? Why does He not remove my illness and suffering?” These feelings of confusion leave many on the path of faith feeling helpless, gradually losing the fervor they once had.



I. Complaints in the Midst of Confusion: Illness, Suffering, and Questions About God

Many Christians around us hope that through sincere prayer, worship, and acts of goodness they will win God’s blessings and see a life marked by ease. However, when confronted with illnesses, family strife, economic hardships, and even societal injustice, feelings of frustration and disappointment soon follow. For example:

- **The Pain of Illness:** Consider “S,” a devout believer who, despite diligently reading Scripture, participating in church activities, and praying for healing, finds no lasting improvement in his chronic illness and frail health. In his heart, he wonders, “I

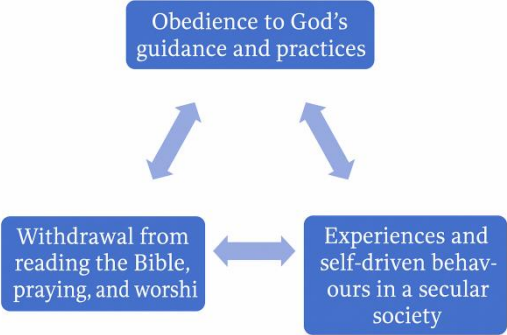
have been so devout—why does God not heal me? Is it that I am not pious enough, or that my prayers have not touched Him?”

- **Family Suffering:** “I,” a woman whose family life is marred by her husband’s emotional coldness and whose children seem distanced from the faith, prays every day for peace and harmony at home. Still, the tension remains, prompting her to question, “I love the Lord so much and pray for my family with all my heart—why doesn’t God bring change to my family?”

- **Career Setbacks:** “N,” a hardworking Christian struggling in his career with little promotion and barely enough income to support his family, cannot help but complain, “I work so diligently—why does God not grant me some good fortune to make my life easier?”

These doubts and complaints are not uncommon among believers. Many expect that their devoted efforts will automatically yield God’s blessings; when reality falls short, their understanding of the true essence of faith begins to waver.

But have you ever considered that the questions raised by S, I, and N stem not from a lack of obedience to God but rather from a desire to control their own lives—hoping that their piety will secure an effortlessly smooth life? In these hearts, the “conduit of the spirit” has become blocked by self-centeredness, making it difficult for God’s love to flow freely.



II. The Example of Job: Another Perspective on Suffering

In the midst of these doubts, we can draw deep insight from the Book of Job. Job was a man who was completely righteous, who revered God and “avoided evil” (Job 1:8b, paraphrased). Yet he suffered the loss of his property, children, and health in extremis. Some of his friends wondered if his suffering was a result of sin,

but Job understood that his trials were not born of his wrongdoing. His story teaches us that illness and adversity are not always the result of human shortcomings; rather, they can serve as profound tests of faith that lead us to a deeper understanding of God.

It is important to note that, as sinners, most of us do not live up to Job's standard of complete righteousness. In many cases our inner "conduit" is already clogged by both visible and hidden sin—as though excess fat blocks the blood vessels—preventing God's love from circulating freely.

III. Knowing God: The Fundamental Path to Cleansing the Heart

Unlike us, Job eventually had a direct encounter with God in the midst of his suffering, coming to see Him with his own eyes ("But now my eye sees You.") (Job 42:5b NKJV). However, it must be recognized that while many pains and hardships do not result from our errors, our limited understanding of God's nature may lead us to misinterpret our trials as neglect or punishment, rather than as opportunities for deeper reliance on Him. When we face illnesses, family discord, or career setbacks, we should, above all, approach these challenges with a repentant heart—cleansing our inner conduit so that God's love may flow. Unlike S, I, and N, we should not merely grumble about our circumstances but should repent and actively immerse ourselves in the environment God has prepared for us.

In our afflictions, if we are able to truly "see" God, we will realize that these experiences are opportunities for deepening our relationship with Him. God does not stand aloof from our pain; rather, through our suffering, He walks with us, helping us grow, urging us to submit to His guidance, and calling us to repent with decisive courage. The purpose of cleansing our inner conduit is to foster a deeper knowledge of God, to trust in His sovereignty, and to let His love flow unimpeded through our lives. This state of freedom is the ultimate form of glory that creation can bestow upon its Creator.

IV. Becoming a Conduit of Love Through Repentance

As discussed, to become a conduit for God's love, we must first repent and cleanse our hearts. Only when the bitterness, confusion, and misinterpretations we harbor are removed can God's love flow freely through us to others. Repentance is not a form of self-abasement; it is the honest admission of our weakness—a willingness to allow God to enter our hearts and remove the impurities that hinder love. Just as Job testified to God's truth in his suffering, Christians too can achieve deeper spiritual growth through repentance, becoming vessels of love.

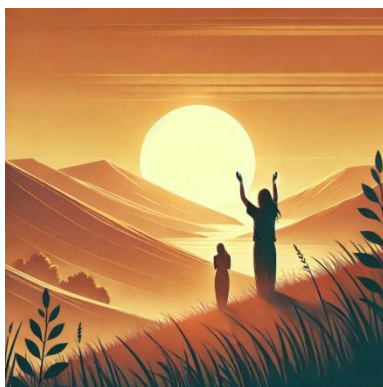
Particularly after experiencing trials, what is most urgent is not to demand from God in accordance with our limited needs, but first to reflect on whether our inner conduit is blocked by the “fat” of sin. Identify what areas require repentance, and let your prayers reflect that. Only when our hearts are cleansed will they have room to receive whatever result God chooses to bestow. At that moment, we might compare our experience to Job's—certainly, believers like S, I, and N may need further insight into relinquishing self-centered control in order to truly live out the freedom offered by God.

Though we may not fully comprehend the meaning of every hardship, each trial on the journey of faith helps to clear our inner conduit. In life, suffering is not divine punishment but another way God demonstrates His love for us—guiding us to trust in and obey Him even beyond favorable circumstances. Both major afflictions and the smallest daily troubles reflect the presence of God's guidance and plan.

Difficulties serve as a mirror, urging us to repent and submit, returning our hearts to God's path. In overcoming our struggles, we must repent and seek God's guidance for the wounds that have persisted from long-term disobedience. God has indeed forgiven our transgressions through Christ, but we must also forgive ourselves, let go of our old selves, and turn back to God.

When we repent of our grievances and cleanse our inner conduit, God's love will naturally flow through us. This love is not limited to times of prosperity—it transcends circumstances. As Jesus said, “and said, “Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 18:3). Here, the term “little

children” no longer refers to the naïveté of pre-temptation Adam but to those who, even when endowed with worldly wisdom, are willing to lay aside personal grievances and resistances to God’s plan, serving others and living out His love as the light and salt of the world. Job’s story shows that true blessing is not the absence of all suffering, but the ability to let go of delusions in the midst of pain, trust in God, and act out His love.



A Blessing: Let God’s Love Flow, and Live Out the Freedom of Faith

Many believers’ complaints and confusion stem from an incomplete understanding of God, including my own. In learning from Scripture, be careful not to be swayed solely by scattered “golden sayings” online or interpret the Bible in a rigid, mechanical manner. Each person has a unique plan and purpose in God’s eyes—let us face the environment God has prepared with a heart eager for growth, understanding His plan fully.

Cleansing the inner conduit means not only surrendering our grievances but also seeking a deeper vision in our faith—allowing God’s love to flow through us and be shared with others. May we, through repentance and trust, become channels of God’s love, allowing His grace to flow in our lives and bring light and hope to this world.

Please, dear brothers and sisters, join together in prayer for this!

Unleash the “Power of Depression” and Find Yourself

Introduction: *As of 2022, it is estimated that around 95 million people in China suffer from depression—second only to cardiovascular and cerebrovascular diseases—with patients under age 18 making up 30.28% (over 28 million). Globally, the incidence of depression is about 3.1%, but in China it reaches 5%–6% and is rising year by year; while women account for more depression cases, men suffer from a higher suicide rate. Additionally, young people, urban residents, and those with a higher level of education are particularly at risk. The causes of depression are notably apparent in the realms of work, study, relationships, and social adaptation.*

Many friends believe that depression will never affect them. Yet, when colleagues, friends, or even family members are diagnosed with “depressive state” or “depression,” one cannot help but notice that more and more people are identified with what is called a “disease” of depression. Personally, I understand depression as the powerful self’s capitulation—or even retreat—in the face of a much stronger reason; from a faith perspective, it is the state of being stalled after encountering obstacles in the very purpose and will of the Creator who leads you.

“The Power of Depression” is an insightful psychological work written by Dr. Shanze Izumitani, the director of a Japanese psychiatric hospital. Drawing on more than twenty years of clinical experience, this book reexamines depression and subverts traditional notions. Dr. Izumitani argues that depression is not merely an affliction to be overcome but also an opportunity for awakening. Through this book, readers can understand the causes of depression, learn how to live with it, and ultimately achieve inner growth and rebirth.

The subtitle “Dormant, Awakening, Emerging as a Butterfly” perfectly encapsulates the author’s core idea: Depression is a unique stage in life—a prelude to transformation. By undergoing this period of dormancy, we can, upon awakening, welcome the tranquility and renewal of our inner being.

I recommend this book for two reasons. First, not because I have read it all, but because a friend once shared with me an audio explanation of its content. I found the material deeply engaging and listened to it many times with great reflection. Second, over these years, I have seen four or five friends, each in varying degrees of depression, whose experiences have greatly changed the way I care for others. Many of us have grown up being constantly “encouraged” and believe that offering encouragement can help others overcome their difficulties or illnesses—but depression is different. What people in such a state truly need is validation from within, not aimless cheerleading. Patient, empathetic companionship is the most suitable remedy. I have come to realize that the person most in need of help and change might very well be someone close to the depressed individual; we, too, must learn to change ourselves to better help those around us.

The most distinctive aspect of this book lies not in treating the disease but in “the power of depression.” This title expresses the author’s deep care for those struggling with depression and his hope that they can, by relying on the methods he outlines, eventually reclaim themselves. Naming it “the power” is no accident. In the same spirit, I recommend this book so that any brother or sister in need may see the grace and protection of the Creator, gain strength through faith, and ultimately find themselves again.

I. Key Points from the Book: Causes of Depression and Main Treatment Concepts

In the book, Dr. Izumitani makes two revolutionary points. First of all, he believes that depression is valuable and an opportunity for people to wake up in modern society. In a fast-paced life, we often ignore our inner needs and feelings, and depression is like a wake-up call to stop and listen to our inner voice. Through depression, we can get to know ourselves more deeply and discover our true desires and pursuits deep inside.

Secondly, Dr. Izumitani emphasized that patients with depression should get enough rest and give up the idea of treating depression as an enemy. He pointed out that depression

is not a disease that can be overcome by willpower, but a process that takes time and patience to heal. In this process, patients need to learn to let go of all stress and obligations and allow themselves to immerse themselves in rest and recovery. Only in this way can patients truly get out of the haze of depression and regain the joy and meaning of life. The views are briefly as follows, for more information, please read the original book or listen to the following interpretation several times:

1. **The Cause of Depression: Overly High Self-Expectations**

Dr. Izumitani points out that much of modern depression stems from people setting impossibly high demands on themselves. In the workplace, at home, and in social situations, many strive to perform perfectly in order to satisfy external expectations, even going so far as to ignore their inner, true needs so as not to disappoint others. This constant self-repression eventually leads to mental breakdown and depression. By trying to meet unrealistic standards, individuals create invisible chains that prevent them from facing their genuine selves.

2. **Key Treatment Point: Letting Go of High Standards and Embracing Reality**

According to Dr. Izumitani, the key to treating depression lies in relinquishing these unrealistic self-demands and accepting life's inherent imperfections. He emphasizes that depression is not a condition that can be overcome through sheer willpower alone; it requires a period of dormancy in which patients learn to rest, recalibrate, and reflect. By releasing the relentless pursuit of external perfection, individuals can better accept their limitations and rediscover inner equilibrium.

3. **A Different Interpretation of Depression: From Negativity to Awakening**

In contrast to traditional views that see depression solely as a negative state to be conquered, Dr. Izumitani argues that depression serves as an important alarm bell—a call to pause and examine the irrational pressures and contradictions in life. He stresses that depression is an essential awakening process, one that helps us uncover what our hearts truly desire and, through reflection and adjustment, discover a healthier way to live.



II. Rebirth in the Midst of Depression and Its Concordance with Faith

Embracing depression as an opportunity to reassess one's life and faith is a rare chance to reclaim oneself. The process of healing after such a rupture empowers one to better face life. This idea echoes the broader experiences common in faith journeys.

From our childhood onward, we learn through a repeated cycle of “learning—facing setbacks—repairing our understanding—rising in self-awareness.” Every encounter with a person or situation that challenges our preconceptions serves as a lesson, gradually building our resilience. However, what cannot be overcome through mere effort may plant seeds of depression in our hearts. This is especially true when we try to endure life's challenges by our own means rather than accepting help from our Creator.

In this way, one's inner thoughts can become a repository for destructive emotions, gradually taking root and eventually erecting an impassable wall between us and the world. Tearing down this wall is a gradual process—it involves reassessing one's beliefs and learning to let go. The title “*The Power of Depression*” suggests that the strength of faith can help people emerge from depression. I hope that brothers and sisters may, through Jesus Christ's redemptive work, crush every seed of negativity underfoot.

Dr. Izumitani's concept of “rebirth” echoes the Biblical notion of being “born again.” In Christianity, rebirth means that through God's guidance, we put aside our old selves and welcome new life. This idea aligns perfectly with his view that overcoming

self-imposed high demands—finding a balanced state—is critical to healing.

1. The Shackles of Self-Imposed Standards and the Balance of Faith:

Depressed individuals often confine themselves with unrealistic expectations. These standards may not only be impractical but also inconsistent with one's faith. Dr. Izumitani reminds patients not to force themselves to conform to requirements that do not suit them; instead, they must realistically assess their abilities and limits to make wise choices. This perspective is entirely consistent with the Christian teaching that one must depend on God's strength rather than one's own wisdom.

Within the framework of faith, we are taught to rely on God's guidance and not to try to control everything with our own power. Proverbs 3:5 NKJV teaches: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding;" When we learn to measure our capacity and surrender unnecessary stress to God, we can lighten the burden on our hearts and move toward a freer and healthier state.

2. The Dormant Phase of Depression: A Time for Spiritual Rest and Rebirth:

Dr. Izumitani asserts that the state of depression is a period of dormancy—a time for the soul to recuperate and rebirth, very much akin to the Biblical idea of renewal. In this phase, one should not rush to revert to the old state of self-reliance, but instead use the time to reflect, let go of the obsessive drive for worldly success and external validation, and focus on inner healing and growth. The Bible teaches that rebirth is not just physical recovery but spiritual renewal. Through such rebirth, we can discover new meaning in life and face the world with a fresh perspective.

This process of "rebirth" is actually to help depressed patients find a balanced lifestyle, and this lifestyle is not a complete escape from society, but a return to a state that suits them. Similarly, biblical regeneration means that through God's grace, we are freed from our over-dependence on the world and into a state of peace and freedom that God has prepared.

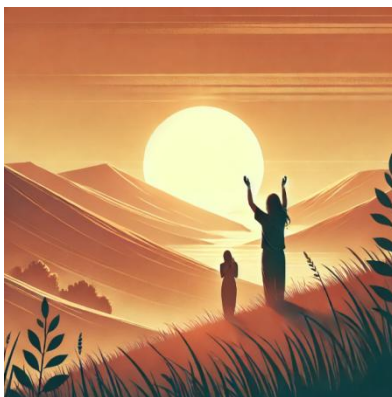
Jesus said in Matthew 11:28, "Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "In the dormant period of depression, patients can find rest through faith, so as to obtain spiritual rebirth and healing.

This freedom through faith is not an escape from reality, but a way to live in harmony with oneself, with society, and with God through God's leading. This is in line with Dr. Izumitani's emphasis on "not forcibly adapting to social standards, but finding a balance that suits you."

3. Integrating Faith and Psychological Healing: Returning to Our Original Purpose as God's Creation:

Christianity teaches that God created us to enjoy an intimate relationship with Him and to live in the freedom and joy that come from His guidance. Modern pressures and temptations, however, have led us astray. We are often molded into being people who are dutiful, proper, and obedient to authority. Yet when we encounter factors we cannot change, we become disoriented—and depression can be seen as God's gentle reminder to stop, reflect, and reconsider our lifestyle. Through faith, we can come to know our Creator once again, reestablish that anchor for our soul, and rediscover the inner peace and happiness with which we were originally endowed.

Dr. Izumitani's idea of rebirth resonates with the Biblical concept: by letting go of our old obsessions through reflection and adjustment, we find new direction in life. This return is not only personal healing but also an act of worship to God, manifesting His grace and guidance in our lives.



Conclusion: The Dual Healing Power of Faith

For those currently experiencing depression, *The Power of Depression* offers a fresh perspective, reminding us not to be bound by our unrealistic self-expectations, but to use our dormant period to find a rhythm that suits us and reconcile with ourselves. If you are a Christian, integrating Biblical teachings can help you more deeply understand the process of depression and rebirth.

The Bible teaches that through Christ's rebirth, we break free of old chains and embrace a new life. This idea is mirrored in Dr. Izumitani's perspective—depression is not merely an obstacle, but a process by which God leads us toward awakening and freedom. Although the author's personal faith orientation may be uncertain, his extensive research all speaks of the power of God. May every friend who currently finds themselves in a state of depression, through this book and the strength of faith, find that critical point of balance to live harmoniously in this complex society, enjoying true peace and joy, and returning to the freedom and happiness with which God originally created us. Please, dear brothers and sisters, join together in prayer for this cause!

How ‘Ashamed’ a Person Is, the Further They Are from God

Dear brothers and sisters, today I wish to discuss a topic I’ve long been hesitant to address—the gap between our self-centered attitudes and God’s guidance. It can be explained simply: in our idle moments our minds buzz with countless thoughts and possible outcomes. Yet when reality strikes, we often find ourselves secretly relieved that many of our worries were merely “overthinking.” Still, there is another situation: when matters crucial to our personal interests or important issues that seem not so urgent arise, we tend to be indecisive. Many ideas and words remain at the level of “just a thought,” thereby delaying more significant matters. Today, let’s explore this phenomenon. In our everyday lives, many people choose silence or hide their true feelings out of “shame” or concern for saving face. In doing so, they suppress their authentic selves, resulting in estranged family relationships, neglected inner needs, and even harm to the overall health of our shared living environment. But have you ever considered that this “culture of saving face” not only constrains our expression and action but also gradually drives us further from God’s truth and love? In reality, such “thin-skinned” behavior is a cover for our avoidance of facing ourselves, critical thought, and genuine life.

This discussion exposes the deep cost of such silence: being “ashamed” not only disconnects us from others but also widens the gap between us and God. As believers, we are called to rise above this bondage of pride and to live out a critical-thinking approach to life and our true selves, returning to God’s guidance.

I. The Consequences of Suppressing Inner Emotions: Neglect of One’s Own Needs

Many people, from childhood, grow accustomed to hiding their true feelings out of “shame” or a concern for saving face—especially when it comes to expressing their emotional needs toward parents, family members, or those close to them. Children often fear criticism or being labeled “disobedient” and so dare not express their deep yearning for love, care, and understanding. However, such emotional suppression gradually

creates an inner barrier over time, distancing us from our parents and loved ones and even affecting our self-acceptance. In adulthood, this unmet need for emotional expression often becomes part of the wounds incurred within the original family, making it difficult to achieve true inner peace.

For many generations growing up in New China (roughly the 1950s to the 1970s), children often faced crowded households and poor living conditions. At that time, simply having enough to eat was considered good fortune, and parents had little opportunity to nurture or educate the emotional lives of their children. As a result, these children rarely had the chance to honestly express their thoughts. Later, when such children become parents, they struggle to articulate what love really means. They chase after practical goals—seeking to work abroad, secure jobs in foreign enterprises, or “grab” success—while neglecting the nurturing and care their own children need. Many among the 80s and 90s generations were raised in environments where love was in short supply. Although their material conditions have improved and they gradually get the chance to speak openly, many have still grown up in families where emotional neglect was common. Thus, the term “original family trauma” has come into being. In truth, parents do not intend to hurt their children; rather, they are often unaware that a lack of love is a deep wound.

I recall that due to our parents’ difficult lives and lack of experience caring for children, I was sent to be raised by my grandmother and uncle in rural Laiyang from the age of one and a half to six and a half, before being returned to the city for schooling. In retrospect, while my grandmother ensured I survived physically, my inner longing for maternal and paternal love was never truly satisfied—nor was I given a chance to ask for it. Consider the love received by my children and those of my friends; while this example may not be perfectly appropriate, it does convey an ineffable regret.

The process of growing up is one of learning, reflection, and gradually making up for that lack of love. Through it, we come to see the sins of our parents, our own sins, and the sweetness of repentance. It is heartening that along the way we also catch

sight of God's love: "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, But now my eye sees You." (Job 42:5 NKJV)

It can be said that every person has an inner need given by God—a precious desire for love, understanding, and trust. True believers should know that these needs must be expressed courageously rather than hidden or suppressed. The example I've just given was common in the 1960s: many children would hide their needs out of "shame." If such needs are not healed later in life, they may lead one to lose oneself and gradually stray from God's truth. What is God? He is love. Everything is ultimately about love. Each of us must learn to cast off the bondage of saving face, understand and meet our own needs, and thereby return to our true identity given by God. The saying "A child is known by the age of three; by seven, you can tell what he will be" actually describes whether an original family nurtures an environment of open communication and equality—a true starting line for a child's life.



II. Communication Breakdown in Intimate Relationships: Family Estrangement

Within the family, if we choose silence because of "saving face," our intimate relationships are inevitably compromised. The Chinese concept of "the Doctrine of the Mean" has led many to behave politely toward outsiders while venting negative emotions on family members. Over time, this "face-saving culture" strips the family of the frankness and understanding it

should have. Intimacy gives way to coldness and misunderstanding—ranging from differences in lifestyle and original family influences between genders to conflicting marital philosophies and disparities in how parents educate their children.

A family is meant to be a haven of love gifted by God, where we learn to be tolerant and supportive of one another. However, the culture of saving face causes us to lose genuine connection, making family members drift apart. Remember that home is not a place for rigid rules and superficial appearances—it is the place to cast aside pretension and practice love. Each person must dare to express love and care, shedding the constrictions imposed by traditional Chinese society and the so-called “middle way” enforced by our parents. Only then can the family truly become the harbor of love and understanding that God intended. (I have discussed this in detail in my article “On the Reasons Behind Inconsistent Faith Between Spouses”—interested readers may refer to that.)

III. Silence in Society: How “Shame” Fuels Injustice

When being “ashamed” becomes a way of life, the negative phenomena in society only grow worse. Many people, when they face injustice or sin, choose to remain silent because of their “thin-skinned” nature. This kind of silence is not only a neglect of justice—it is, in effect, an implicit approval of wrongdoing. Such passive silence creates fertile soil for unhealthy practices to thrive, further hindering the healthy development of society.

Many, confronted with social problems such as the proliferation of harmful food, disappearances of people, excessive law enforcement, or rough treatment of patients in hospitals, choose to stay silent. Particularly those in positions of power, fearing an impact on their own interests, are even less willing to speak out. This “collective silence” creates an environment where injustice and sin can flourish, exacerbating social problems.

As the Bible teaches, “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” (Romans 12:21 NKJV). Choosing silence only helps sin to expand and is a form of passive indulgence. The collective “shame” not only prevents us from defending justice, but also makes us complicit in sin. This saving-face mindset not

only prevents us from pursuing truth but gradually distances society from righteousness and compassion.

As believers immersed in a culture marked by these attitudes, let us endeavor to break free from the constraints of “the middle way” and the pressure to save face. I, too, struggle with this, and I call upon more people to use critical thinking to discern right from wrong and to speak out for justice.

God’s teaching is that we are to be the light and the salt—to manifest His truth and righteousness. If we remain silent out of a fear of embarrassment, we not only violate God’s command but also distance both ourselves and society further from His love. Every single believer who dares to speak out is a representative of God in society, and our actions can bring about positive change.



IV. Faith Grants Us Critical Thinking and Courage to Transcend the Bonds of Saving Face

Faith helps us transcend ourselves and our fears. God grants us the courage to face life’s difficulties and injustices. When our conscience is stirred, it is God urging us to do what is right and to stand up. But if we choose to use “being thin-skinned” or “being ashamed” as an excuse, can that silence be seen as a lie to God? When our daily petitions and prayers are answered, should we then, with our limited self, disregard God’s guidance?

The Lord Jesus said, “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it

under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:14-16 NKJV). God’s will is that believers be light and salt, influencing others and guiding them toward truth and righteousness. If we keep silent out of “trouble” or a desire to save face, we are effectively shirking the responsibility God has entrusted to us. We are evading our societal responsibilities and running away from God’s call, rejecting His guidance.

Our living environment indeed has many problems, and although the issues are complex, many stem from the constraints of “shame” and saving face. At the very least, we should use our critical thinking to gradually break free of the limitations of “middle way” thinking, discerning between good and evil, truth and falsehood. Faith is not a blind following; rather, it helps us see the essence of issues in this world. We are called to care for one another, to speak out courageously, and to pursue justice. Every time we stand up to express our true feelings and expose sin and injustice, we live out God’s truth and become a light for the world.

In our family relationships, we can set aside the pretensions of “saving face” and genuinely express love and understanding, thereby drawing closer to one another. In society, we should boldly confront injustices and give voice to the vulnerable—even if various social platforms impose some degree of censorship, these channels still remain. God has endowed us with critical thinking and inner courage to care for others and shoulder our responsibilities, allowing us to live our true selves in our families, in society, and in our faith.



Conclusion

“Being ashamed” or “having thin skin” may appear harmless, but in reality, they alienate us from our loved ones and our communities. Fundamentally, this occurs because we let our “strong sense of self” replace God’s guidance, turning into hidden idols in our hearts. Such silence not only deprives us of the opportunity to express love and fulfill our social responsibilities, but it also leads us astray from God’s truth. God considers each one of us precious; He does not wish for us to become lost in a world seemingly ruled by Satan, nor does He want us to let go of His hand.

May we all courageously respond to God’s call, cast aside the chains of saving face, and live out genuine emotions in our families. Let’s transform our “shame” into an expression of God’s freedom and joy, and be witnesses of justice in society—using the power of our faith to bring warmth and hope to the world.

Please, dear brothers and sisters, let us join together in prayer for this!

Why Should We Forgive Others?

Preparation for Reading: “Cinderella’s Revelation”

Cinderella is a classic animated film produced by Walt Disney based on the famous fairy tale. The story tells of Cinderella, who, after the successive deaths of her mother and father, suffers continuous abuse and torment at the hands of her stepmother and stepsisters. With the help of magic, however, she eventually wins the heart of a prince. Yet when the time comes to face her stepmother again, she does not repay years of hardship with bitterness—instead, she simply says, “I forgive you.”

I believe that this simple sentence carries extraordinary meaning within the story. It seems to express that, having received grace, Cinderella fully embraces the joy of her new life and bids farewell to the sorrows of the past. Her heart is filled with gratitude, faith, and hope for her future. Dear brothers and sisters, can you feel the deep gratitude in Cinderella’s heart? Does this not remind us of our own rebirth? Through God’s grace, we too are enabled to leave behind past sins and pain, and welcome a spiritually renewed life.



In our real lives, each person encounters hurt and offense that can be hard to let go. Trust between people is often fragile—even minor misunderstandings or differences in values can cause rifts. Nowadays, it is popular to say that for those whose “worldviews do not match,” a single word should suffice: “keep your distance”; in two words: “block them immediately.”

The reasons for such reluctance to forgive vary. I have reviewed some information, and in my view the underlying causes can be summarized in three aspects:

- An inherent human impulse for revenge when hurt, rather than forgiveness;
- A self-centered desire for perfection, whereby one cannot let go when others' "imperfections" hurt us; and
- A need to maintain one's sense of control—refusing to forgive becomes a way to sustain one's idealized self, suppressing any impulse to retaliate and invite further trouble.

In this light, a refusal to forgive may appear to protect oneself, but in reality it traps us in bitterness and resentment, damaging our relationship with God. Brothers and sisters, the Bible clearly teaches that forgiving others is not only a response to God's grace but also the pathway to true peace and joy. God has shown infinite patience toward sinners, granting time for repentance; as Christians, we are called to extend that same love and mercy to others. Today, let's discuss several aspects of how we might forgive in the grace of God.

1. The Errors and Dangers of Not Forgiving

At first glance, refusing to forgive seems like a way to resist those who have wronged us—but in truth, its consequences hurt us most. Bitterness and resentment will invade our body, mind, and spirit, preventing us from experiencing the peace that God offers. Matthew 6:15 NKJV reminds us: "But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." When we withhold forgiveness, we harden our hearts, become blind to God's grace, and even weaken our spiritual life—eventually becoming like those who have hurt us. A person who does not forgive can hardly experience the unconditional love and forgiveness of God.

Not forgiving keeps us trapped in anger and pain. It also destroys our relationships with others, affects our mental and physical health, and inflicts lasting damage upon ourselves. As the old saying goes, "Not forgiving is like drinking poison and expecting the other person to die." Choosing to forgive is not only a release for the offender but also a preemptive healing for ourselves.



2. Forgiveness and God's Patience: Emulating the Teaching in Romans

Romans 2:4 NKJV states, “Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?” This verse reveals God’s attitude toward sinners: He does not immediately cast judgment upon our sins but extends immeasurable patience, waiting for us to repent.

Such divine patience serves as our model for forgiveness. Since God is ready to overlook our faults and wait for our return, we too should learn to forgive and give others the opportunity to make amends.

We should not, as illustrated in the parable of the unforgiving servant in Matthew 18:23–35, withhold forgiveness when we have been shown grace ourselves. In our lives, we will encounter injustice and unkindness—sometimes even from powerful or unjust systems. When we choose forgiveness, we are not compromising or showing weakness; rather, we are entrusting those transgressions to God’s judgment, confident in His justice and timing.

3. Shining Like the Sun: Forgiveness as the Manifestation of Love

Forgiveness is like the sun—it shines regardless of whether its warmth is acknowledged. The sun does not stop giving its light even if it is occasionally hidden by clouds or ignored; it simply continues to fulfill its mission. As Christians, our forgiveness and compassion should be similar: we do not base our love on the responses or actions of others, but rather, we persist in loving and forgiving out of the love of God.

Matthew 5:16 NKJV teaches, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”

Our act of forgiveness is not meant to please people but to glorify God. When we choose to forgive, we light a beacon in the darkness, transmitting God’s love and compassion to those around us. Often, those who seem least capable of love or who reject our attempts to help are the ones most in need of it. Forgiveness not only reflects our own love but also extends God’s mercy into their lives. Even if they do not respond, our forgiveness is remembered by our Heavenly Father.



4. The Peace and Joy That Forgiveness Brings

Forgiveness is a liberation for the soul—a key to unlocking inner peace and spiritual freedom. If we refuse to forgive, we remain chained to bitterness; if we choose forgiveness, we invite the healing peace of God, freeing our hearts from resentment. As Philippians 4:7 promises, “And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Forgiving does not mean denying the hurt that has been inflicted; it means surrendering that hurt to God and breaking free from the cycle of pain. In forgiving, our hearts are healed and we experience the joy and blessings of living under God’s gracious mercy. As the Apostle Paul reminds us in Acts 20:35 NKJV, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” When we forgive, we not only liberate ourselves, but we become instruments of God’s blessing to others, experiencing His joy and satisfaction.

5. Forgiveness Is an Act of Gratitude

To forgive others is a tangible expression of gratitude for the grace we have received from God. Since the day we were baptized, we have had our old selves, along with our sinful desires, nailed to the cross. Each day we live is meant to glorify God. How, then, can we stand by and scorn those who are still bound by sin?

Colossians 3:13 NKJV instructs, “bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.” Recognizing that we are all sinners saved by grace, forgiveness becomes a natural outpouring of thanksgiving. As God forgave our sins, we are called to extend that same mercy to others—a heartfelt expression of gratitude for God’s grace that continues His work in our lives.



6. How to Practice Forgiveness

By our own strength, it can be extremely hard to truly forgive—but the Holy Spirit can grant us that power.

- **Prayer:** Ask God to soften your heart and help you release your bitterness.
- **Posture:** I personally suggest praying in a kneeling position (kneel on both knees, with your hands on the ground or your knees, and lean forward).
- **Vocalize:** Pray aloud rather than silently, as silent prayer may allow your thoughts to drift.

We are all sinners who have once rebelled against God. Yet by His mercy we have been reborn. This understanding should enable us to extend compassion to others. Sometimes our own parents or family members may have wounded us deeply due to their immaturity or ignorance. Such wounds can sometimes

seem beyond the healing power of forgiveness alone—but perhaps that too is a unique gift God has given each person. May every one of us—including myself—learn to accept even that hurt with the forgiving love of our Lord Jesus, and, through blessings and prayer, extend that love to our parents, family, and even those who have offended us.



Conclusion: Forgiveness Is a Testament of Love and the Key to Peace

Forgiving others—including our own parents and close friends—is a crucial practice for living out God’s image and is a scene that occurs nearly every day in our lives. Forgiveness brings inner peace and joy; it frees us from bitterness and entanglement, and it allows God’s love to flow from our lives into the lives of others, as our actions of forgiveness respond to God’s gracious mercy and bring glory to Him.

Dear brothers and sisters, are you ready to forgive others? Let us pray together.

The Castrated Faith and the Loss of the Pursuit of Freedom

On the land of China where I live, there are truly fewer than a hundred top-level public servants—almost everyone else is a “master” of their own domain. In the past, our ancestors were slaves or servants, and the life philosophies they held were either inherited from forefathers, drawn from the teachings of Confucius and Mencius, from Buddhism or Taoism, or they became followers of Western religions. After rising to be the masters of their own lives, many believed that freedom and joy would naturally follow. However, reality stands in stark contrast to this ideal. Instead, people have come to rely on these inherited “wisdoms” merely as a means to cope with work, career, and everyday life—a kind of personal “philosophy” that is taken for faith. I, too, as one of those “masters,” have found that I increasingly struggle to experience genuine freedom and happiness. At first, I thought it was something uniquely wrong with me, but after talking with many others who also call themselves “masters,” I discovered that most feel the same way. Statistics show that in China, only about 0.56% of people earn a monthly salary of over 10,000 yuan. Yet my living expenses, mortgage payments, healthcare, and even my social status are all held tightly in someone else’s hand. Even the so-called freedom of thought is stifled—with mouths, hands, and legs all constrained by various forms of censorship. Even what we are taught to believe is given to us only after it has been castrated. So, where is the path for people to pursue a free and joyful life? Countless religions, philosophies, and even atheistic doctrines have been forcefully pinned down by innumerable invisible hands. Layer by layer, that “shiny skin” on our bodies is stripped away, only to be traded for a meager reward that barely lets us survive. Every higher-level aspiration described by Maslow’s hierarchy of needs is either taken out of context or, worse yet, castrated by bureaucrats—eliminating the key ideas that could sustain your life. You find yourself unable to propose suggestions for social prosperity or reform; you cannot pursue or even discuss the teachings revealed to you by the Bible or the

Buddhist scriptures; without the backing of institutional authority, you cannot even obtain the interpretive rights to what you are constitutionally entitled to. Without all these “masters,” you are like a bird that has lost the sky—freedom becomes nothing more than a dream. Today, let us discuss these issues.

Whether Christians or Buddhists, many believers limit their religious practices to superficial rituals and behaviors while ignoring the real transformation of their hearts. In the face of pain and pressure, faith seems to fail to bring real strength, and even make people powerless and confused. From another perspective, the silence of believers is regrettable in the face of internal and external oppression and violence against the Chinese people. What is even more worrying is that such beliefs not only fail to form an influential collective force, but instead strengthen the continuation of a culture that does not dare to speak out and act, and has the momentum to continue to pass it on.

What exactly is the meaning of faith? We can see from the history of Western Christians that in their pursuit of truth and freedom, they dared to challenge authority and resist oppression to gain freedom. In China's nearly 70-year history, you can hardly see this kind of courage in the vast majority of Christians. Some are just endless interpretations of the scriptures, and even the voices of the so-called brave are verbal cries according to the “characteristic rules”, and there is no down-to-earth action in sight. Such an influence of faith not only failed to help individuals achieve inner freedom and growth, but instead contributed to the culture of mediocrity in this land. This tepid belief is not so much fraternity as a selfish accomplice of the castrated version of Western Christianity to more than 2,000 years of cultural perpetuation and its totalitarian rule. Which theologian in China in the 21st century has integrated the Bible with social reality? Can't? Or is there no or is it silent? Still embarrassed to say?

How do we live out a truly free spirit through faith? And how can we teach the next generation to inject fresh sources of ideas into the continuation of Chinese culture, rather than having them repeat the lives of house slaves, couriers, human parts, or

mechanical laborers? No matter where you worship and gather, no matter which temple you burn incense and worship, shouldn't you reflect on this question deeply?



I. Why Does Faith Remain Only Skin-Deep?

1. Formalized Faith:

Many believers confine their religious practice to superficial rituals and behaviors. Whether it is Christians praying, reading scripture, and attending meetings, or Buddhists chanting, burning incense, and making offerings, these practices often become mere formalities. Many assume that such rites are disconnected from real life. But bear in mind that both the Bible and the Buddhist scriptures emerged from the realities of their time and yet are meant to transcend everyday life. If your daily prayer and reading of scripture are not coupled with your personal, real-life experience, you will always feel as though you are simply reciting ancient history. In short, our actions—the totality of our real-life engagement—should be guided by the truth we have learned and lead us inward to seek viable paths rather than a mechanical religious routine.

A mechanical reading of Scripture and the lack of effective, practical religious action cause many believers to become detached from both social reality and their own lives—neglecting the underlying emotional currents that signal deeper issues of faith. For many Buddhists, treating faith as merely a means of gaining blessings or as an escape from reality rather than using Buddhist wisdom to confront life's problems is also a prevalent issue. Remember, the Buddha is not an object merely for veneration; Buddhist teachings are meant to help one become awakened—possessing unsurpassed wisdom to face the challenges of this world rather than ignoring one's karma and cause-and-effect to seek salvation from a muddy existence.

2. The Combination of Social Pressure and Inertia:

In today's competitive society, many people are unable to integrate faith with their daily lives. They either neglect their faith because they are too busy making a living or treat it as a temporary salve without truly transforming it into a force to counter external pressures. When confronted with injustice and oppression, such a superficial faith proves especially impotent. Many choose silence, sometimes even glorifying that silence as "submission" or "seeing through life." In truth, such an attitude only perpetuates injustice and transmits this sense of helplessness to the next generation—becoming the laughing stock of many atheists.

II. The True Meaning of Faith: Freedom and Courage

1. The Core of Faith Is Liberating the Mind:

The essence of true faith lies in freeing one's inner being—so that we might soar in the world rather than be bound by empty forms. The power of faith is not only seen in personal spiritual growth but also in liberating the mind from cultural constraints, empowering one to think independently and pursue true freedom.

Jesus' teachings call not only for love and compassion but for the struggle against injustice and the pursuit of truth. He calls on us to attain inner freedom and to face the oppression of worldly power with courage. Historically, many Western Christians stood up for freedom and fought against oppression—such as during Martin Luther's Reformation or the civil rights movement led by Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. Yet in some faith communities today, that very courage seems to be fading, replaced by acquiescence to the status quo and a sense of powerlessness. (One might recall the film *Bob Marley: One Love*, whose title song likewise calls for unity.)

While Buddhism teaches that one should find liberation within, it does not mean one should retreat from reality; rather, through awakening and mindful awareness, one confronts life's pain and finds wisdom to engage with the world.

2. Faith Must Transform Into Acts of Love:

Faith is not solely a personal choice; it comes with a social responsibility. A faith that is not acted upon is essentially empty.

Believers need to transition from passive acceptance to active practice—demonstrating the power of their faith through tangible actions. Believers must not only focus on their spiritual growth but also unite to confront social injustice. They should integrate their faith into daily life to drive social change and progress. This is easier said than done, whether adjusting one's emotions through repentance, taking personal responsibility, or speaking out for those in distress. In my own experience, I have found it helpful to focus on three things:

(a) living in the present and doing well in one's immediate tasks—without getting overly entangled in past mistakes or future anxieties; (b) encouraging collective action by finding like-minded individuals to work together for social change; and (c) using one's personal capacity to contribute to the transformation of society.

III. How Can We Live Out a Truly Free Spirit Through Faith?

1. Breaking Free from Cultural Constraints:

Traditional Chinese culture, with its emphasis on hierarchy and collectivism, often suppresses individual freedom. The prevalent obedience to authority and the expectation that subordinates must follow their superiors have led to a loss of self. When those in lower positions blindly follow the majority, the harmful effects of such a system multiply. Over time, these patterns—once reinforced by Confucian ideals—result in a society where leaders become disconnected from the people. For instance, the disaster in the 60s of the last century, the ten-year revolution, and the three-year epidemic two years ago are all playing out such cases over and over again.

This mode of thought contrasts sharply with the mindset in many Christian countries, where people think that embracing the Christian faith will automatically result in such a life. However, one must realize that the social environment, too, is the product of relentless struggle and sacrifice—not by resignation but by actively changing the system. This is the fundamental reason why we must break free from cultural constraints, particularly the subservient mindset rooted in Confucian thought. Believers need an inner awakening to rediscover their true worth, to dare

to question authority, and to pursue fairness and justice for both the individual and society.

2. Cultivating Independent Thinking:

Our faith should encourage us to think independently, rather than follow the crowd blindly. The outcome of independent thought may not always be correct, and it may still be in the minority—but that is no reason for us to submit to the majority. Whether as Christians or Buddhists, we need to cultivate within our faith a longing for truth and the ability to critically analyze complex social issues.

3. Demonstrating Faith Through Action:

Faith must be put into practice in everyday life—we must excel in what we do without being overly fixated on immediate gains or losses. Faith is not only the spiritual destination but also a guide for action. What you believe is important; yet, understanding repentance and living well in the present are even more so. When confronted with injustice and oppression, believers need to stand up, unite, and actively work to change the status quo—not just through prayer and patience.

IV. How Does Faith Give Hope to the Next Generation?

1. From Inheritance to Innovation:

The transmission of faith from generation to generation is not only about preserving the best parts of tradition and culture; it is also about discarding what is harmful and infusing new ideas and habits of independent thought—enabling them to break away from the masses. We hope that the next generation will gain freedom, courage, and hope from their faith rather than perpetuating the weakness and mediocrity of their parents. As children grow up, they eventually realize they are part of this flourishing world and see that their parents and relatives may have succumbed to timidity and mediocrity. They might never express their disdain openly, yet deep down they have long distanced themselves. The only reason to forgive their parents is because they see them as one of the many in “the masses”—individuals who lack the capacity to change the world. If they come to recognize and model your example, congratulations—China has gained yet another “master.” Otherwise, please step aside and let them pursue the life they

deserve. As a parent, fulfilling your duty is enough. But if you are willing to be an example, to transform your body, mind, and spirit, then it will lead to a happier family—bringing heaven’s peace to earth.

2. Paving a New Path for the Next Generation:

Through the understanding of faith and the sense of responsibility we demonstrate in facing life and societal issues, the next generation will see that faith is not only a tool for comfort but also a power to confront and change reality. Let them become the pioneers who infuse the spirit of freedom into Chinese culture, not simply as continuators of outdated traditions—neither as “masters” nor as “servants” in the old sense, but as fully realized individuals with independent thought, responsible actions, and a heart full of universal love.

Conclusion: Faith Is the Source of a Free Spirit

The depth of faith is not measured by superficial forms but by whether it brings inner freedom and empowers us to act. In a complex social reality, believers must rise above mere ritual and break free from the shackles of a corrupted culture—liberate our minds, set our hearts free, and combine this inner liberation with practical social action.

True faith is the wellspring of courage. It allows us to face our weaknesses and the injustices of the world, and to find meaning in our actions. Only then can we live a life of freedom and hope and infuse authentic free spirit into Chinese culture—becoming role models and a source of strength for the next generation.

I wonder what your thoughts are after reading this. No matter where you live, whether in China or abroad, regardless of whether you are struggling or prospering, never give up the pursuit and love of freedom—mere mediocre existence is not the hallmark of the Chinese people. May I hope to have many friends walking together on this path, and may more strangers no longer be indifferent, and may present parents be willing to change for the better.

Please, dear brothers and sisters, let us join together in prayer for this cause!

The Matthew Effect and the Exaltation of Grace

Dear brothers and sisters, peace in the Lord!

At the start of the New Year, I began a plan to read through the entire Bible within six months. Today I reached Matthew chapter 25, specifically verses 14–30 (and similarly Luke 19:11–27), which record the “Parable of the Talents.” I would like to share some reflections on this passage.

This section of Scripture, by describing how a master entrusted varying sums of money to three servants according to their abilities, reflects the attitude of Christians toward the gifts (or innate conditions) and the mission bestowed by God. Below is my interpretation of this passage along with some suggestions for our fellow brothers and sisters in the Lord. For ease of comparison, I have also included the related text from Luke’s account.

Scripture and Explanation:

(Matthew 25:14-30 NKJV): ““For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey. Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. And likewise he who had received two gained two more also. But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord’s money. After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them. “So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, ‘Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.’ His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’ He also who had received two talents came and said, ‘Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.’ His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’ “Then he who had received the one talent came and

said, 'Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.' "But his lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. Therefore take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents. 'For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'"

(Luke 19:11-27 NKJV): Now as they heard these things, He spoke another parable, because He was near Jerusalem and because they thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately. Therefore He said: "A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, 'Do business till I come.' But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We will not have this man to reign over us.' "And so it was that when he returned, having received the kingdom, he then commanded these servants, to whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. Then came the first, saying, 'Master, your mina has earned ten minas.' And he said to him, 'Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.' And the second came, saying, 'Master, your mina has earned five minas.' Likewise he said to him, 'You also be over five cities.' "Then another came, saying, 'Master, here is your mina, which I have kept put away in a handkerchief. For I feared you, because you are an austere man. You collect what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow.' And he said to him, 'Out of your own mouth I will judge you, you wicked servant. You knew that I was an austere man, collecting what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow. Why then did you not put my money in the bank, that at my

coming I might have collected it with interest?’ “And he said to those who stood by, ‘Take the mina from him, and give it to him who has ten minas.’ (But they said to him, ‘Master, he has ten minas.’) ‘For I say to you, that to everyone who has will be given; and from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. But bring here those enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, and slay them before me.’ ”

Let's compare the explanations in conjunction with the original text, in Matthew's account, the unit of money is “talent” (a unit sometimes interpreted as a measure of both wealth and personal ability). One talent is substantial—equivalent to about 30 kilograms of silver, which at today's silver price (roughly 7 RMB per gram) is valued at around 210,000 RMB. Thus, the servant who received five talents would have been given approximately 1,050,000 RMB; the one with two talents about 420,000 RMB; and the one with one talent, around 210,000 RMB. These figures are startling and remind us that, in this parable, the “money” may also be understood figuratively as representing one's abilities or talents. Though every person's gifts differ, the call to faithfully steward what the Lord has given remains consistent.

In Luke's account, however, the master calls his ten servants and gives them “ten minas” (the original word is “mēnna,” a unit roughly equivalent to ten pieces of silver) before setting them to work until his return. Here, one mina (about 500 grams of silver, which—at 7 RMB per gram—is roughly 3,500 RMB) is much less in comparison. Even in today's context, earning 3,500 RMB is no small feat, let alone multiplying it to achieve 1,050,000 or 420,000 RMB. One might imagine that if I were one of the servants receiving such an amount, my only option might be to sell my master's house to generate the necessary funds—which, of course, would incur a severe penalty. The servant in Matthew's parable who received one talent, if he ended up with 210,000 RMB and did nothing to invest it (or at least deposit it in a fixed savings account), would not only forfeit his reward but also lose the opportunity to honor his master's trust. In contrast, in Luke's account, the servant given 3,500 RMB would likely need to

hustle by, say, wholesaling oranges at a street stall to generate profit.

The Real-World Meaning of the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25):

Many of you may have heard of the “Matthew Effect,” a term coined in the mid-20th century by sociologist Robert K. Merton. It describes the phenomenon where “the rich get richer and the poor get poorer” or more broadly, where those who already have much receive even more, while those with little see even less. Its name is derived from this very passage in Matthew. The “Matthew Effect” illustrates a commonly observed social phenomenon. However, in many commentaries on this parable, the money is also interpreted as representing the gifts God bestows upon individuals. I agree with this view. What we should explore in this passage is not solely the content described by the Matthew Effect, but also its practical, real-life significance.

- **The Master as a Symbol of God:** In the parable, the master entrusts his money to his servants “according to each man’s ability.” This may be understood as signifying that, after Christ’s ascension, He has distributed grace and responsibilities among believers according to their abilities, circumstances, and unique qualities. From birth onward, and throughout life—in every situation we face in work or daily living—God’s blessing accompanies us. Though God’s expectations vary with individual conditions, the ultimate goal is consistent: to work for His Kingdom and to glorify His name.

- **The Servants as a Symbol of Christians:** The three servants represent different kinds of Christians. The first and second servants (those given five and two talents) symbolize those who diligently use God’s gifts and labor to expand His Kingdom; they do not become discouraged by differences in conditions but actively invest the resources given by God. The third servant (who received one talent) represents those who hide their gifts, complain about what they have, and are unwilling to work for God. His failure in handling the master’s gift is due to fear and laziness.

- **Money as a Symbol of Inherent Gifts and Grace:** The money given by the master can be understood as symbolizing the

inherent conditions God has bestowed on each person—such as family background, education, social status, and personal talents. Though these gifts may differ in quantity, God does not judge by amount but by whether one uses them faithfully and responsibly in answer to His calling.

- **The Fairness of Reward and Punishment:** In the parable, the master's rewards for the first two servants are identical in their commendation of their faithfulness. This indicates that God values diligence and loyalty over the sheer quantity of the gift. In contrast, the third servant loses his talent and receives a harsh rebuke because he fails to act on what was entrusted to him. This reminds many Christians today not to let economic or societal constraints, such as planned economies, tainted food supplies, or the inhumane commercialization of healthcare, cause them to lose sight of following Christ wholeheartedly.

The Current Condition and Shortcomings of Christians:

- **Lack of Awareness of God's Gifts:** Many Christians are unaware of the gifts and grace God has given them. They tend to focus solely on what they can gain rather than reflect on the blessings available to them. In situations of lower family, social, or educational resources, a sense of inferiority may prevail, leading individuals to mistakenly believe that God's call is only for those with exceptional abilities, overlooking that what God truly values is a heart of loyalty.

- **Pride and Sloth Following Material Prosperity:** Some Christians who enjoy more favorable economic or social conditions become complacent and even attribute their success solely to their own efforts, rather than acknowledging God's grace. They may neglect their responsibility to glorify God and serve others.

- **The Negative Consequence of Poverty:** Similar to the parable's third servant, some Christians—especially within our current society—choose to bury their God-given talents out of fear or external pressure. They mistakenly believe that their poverty limits their faithfulness, even though poverty is not a barrier to serving God. Instead, it is a time when they most need to rely on Him.

- **A Lack of a Long-Term Kingdom Perspective:** Some Christians lack long-term vision regarding God’s Kingdom, focusing only on immediate comfort while neglecting the calling He has placed on their lives. Their practice of faith often remains shallow and ritualistic, reflecting the “castrated faith and the absence of the pursuit of freedom” described above.

How Should Christians Regard God’s Gifts?

- **Faithfulness Regardless of One’s Conditions:** The Scripture reminds us that regardless of the conditions in which we are born, God’s requirement for every person is the same: to faithfully use everything He has given for His Kingdom. Consider role models such as Nick Vujicic and others who rely on God—who reflect the example of the first and second servants. They do not envy others’ circumstances, but rather recognize that the “one talent” in their hands is equally precious.
- **Guarding Against Complacency After Material Abundance:** If you have greater resources or better conditions, remember that these are all gifts from God, intended to glorify Him and to manifest His love through helping others. Engaging in community service or contributing to the church are ways to put these gifts to work—but do not fall into pride or complacency. As Luke 12:48 warns, “To whom much is given, much will be required.”
- **Reliance on God Amid Material Scarcity:** Even if your inherent conditions are limited, do not let material scarcity cause you to feel inferior or powerless. Instead, look to God and let the peace and wisdom He provides allow you to break free of environmental constraints and actively pursue life’s purpose.
- **Cultivating a Kingdom Perspective:** Christians in our land should broaden their horizons, transcending personal gains and immediate concerns, and break free from the confined mindset imposed by authority (“old master” mentality). Cast your eyes outward toward the overall plan of God’s Kingdom, actively participate in church ministry, evangelism, and social welfare—responding to God’s call with action.
- **Trusting in God’s Fairness:** God’s rewards are based on faithfulness rather than the size of one’s achievements. Whether you receive “five talents” or “one talent,” if you use it

wholeheartedly, God will say, “Well done, good and faithful servant! You will share in my joy.”

Conclusion:

Matthew 25:14–30 reminds us that every gift from God is a part of His Kingdom. Christians are called to be faithful stewards of these gifts regardless of their magnitude—responding actively to God’s call. For those who have abundant resources, do not fall into pride or lethargy; remember that all you have comes from God. For those in hardship, rely even more on God’s grace as you pursue the meaning of life with faith and freedom. May we all use what we have to glorify God and serve others, becoming good and faithful servants on this journey of faith.

Imagine Orwell Continuing to Write 1984: A Prairie Blaze Born from Awakening and Courage

George Orwell (June 25, 1903 – January 21, 1950) was a famous British novelist, journalist, and social critic. After he went to Spain in 1936 to participate in the Civil War, he was secretly monitored by the International Brigades—led by the Communist International, which regarded him as a fanatic Trotskyist—and he was even targeted for assassination by the Spanish Republican forces. Witnessing Stalin’s totalitarianism, Orwell became even more committed to supporting democratic socialism while deepening his caution against all forms of totalitarianism. All his later works were written in direct or indirect opposition to totalitarian regimes. In 1948, *1984* was completed; the title is simply the year “1948” turned around to “1984,” reflecting a difference of 36 years. Imagine if Orwell had lived until 1984—how would he have described the state of Oceania in the 36 years that followed, and even in the years thereafter?



Continuing Chapter One: Oceania’s Past and Present

In the history of Oceania, “truth” has never existed. The birth of this nation was promoted as a great “peaceful liberation,” but in reality it was a regime built on lies and violence much like the dynasties of thousands of years past. The difference is that the rulers of Oceania employed an even more covert method of governance. In the early days of Oceania’s establishment, its rulers used the distribution of material goods to attract and control the populace; later, they shifted to controlling thought as the core of their management. Regardless of how the outside

world changed, Oceania has always kept its people firmly chained in the quagmire of survival by exploiting them with material and monetary means. The top-down system suppresses the freedom and brilliance of human nature through three major methods:

1. **Lies Become Truth:** The transformation of language is Oceania's most potent weapon. The new language ("Newspeak") was designed to reduce vocabulary and twist meanings, thereby depriving people of the ability to think about complex issues. "Freedom" is redefined as "a form of bondage," and "equality" is interpreted as "the virtue of obeying order." With each update of the dictionary, humanity's capacity to express its true inner feelings is further weakened. Eventually, lies become the only "truth." These falsehoods permeate every corner of society. Factories mass-produce food tainted with chemicals, causing disease to spread; the lower classes are abducted and used as raw material for organ trafficking, serving as a "spare parts depot" for the domestic elite and even for foreign "lovers of Oceania." Meanwhile, people's daily lives are completely crushed under the weight of mere survival, with neighbors reporting on each other and families mistrusting one another—the entire society loses its trust.

2. **Total Surveillance of Thought:** Every citizen lives under the watchful eyes of countless surveillance screens. These devices record each person's every move. Whether it is the minutiae of facial features, voice tones, or body movements, any deviation from prescribed norms in the "Oceania dictionary" may trigger severe punishment for "thoughtcrime." This all-encompassing monitoring not only destroys privacy but also keeps people in a perpetual state of terror. Ordinary citizens are not entirely unaware of the oppression of the system; however, many choose silence to protect their families and secure basic survival.

Continuing Chapter Two: Big Brother's Late Regime

From the time Orwell published *1984* until a hypothetical continuation set in the genuine year 1984, and then another 36 years into Orwell's "forecast" for Oceania, the following scenario

unfolds: the “Big Brother” of old, now in his twilight years, is frail and on the brink of collapse. He no longer cares about the suffering of the people, nor does he labor to camouflage himself as their “leader.” His singular goal is to erase the concept of “freedom” entirely from the human consciousness and to ensure that no patch of land within Oceania—if any free or democratic shadow should dare appear—remains separate. If any trace of freedom arises, it will be swallowed up and assimilated at the cost of sacrificing people’s interests, all in the name of creating one “great Oceania, one single voice.”

1. **Enhanced Surveillance to Eradicate Privacy:**

- **Facial, Voice, and Body Recognition:** In the later era of Oceania, the surveillance system has been continuously upgraded. Possessing even more efficient voice recognition and behavioral monitoring technology, it can analyze in real time the gestures and tones of target groups to determine their “loyalty” and whether their words or actions deviate from the approved language of Oceania. Any infraction is met with severe punishment. By this stage, journalism has become virtually extinct; television and internet news are no longer followed.

- **Thought Control Devices:** In this later era, biological technologies in Oceania have far exceeded global standards. Under Big Brother’s high pressure, a device called the “Neural Terminal Corrector” has been invented to “correct” the memories and personalities of thoughtcriminals. Mental hospitals and various official training schools have merged and been transformed into “Ideological Correction Centers,” where cutting-edge AI technology is used to physically indoctrinate these groups—especially thoughtcriminals—with the approved Oceania lexicon, Big Brother’s ideological texts, prescribed thought patterns, and speeches from official settings. This ensures that management at all levels fully adopts “one thought, one voice, one dream.” Additionally, for both criminal and civil cases, offenders not only serve their sentences but must undergo ideological correction before release, completely eradicating any “criminal genes.”

2. **The Paradox of Power: Big Brother’s Fear of a Vacuum**

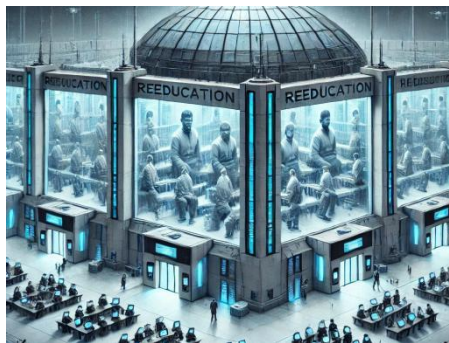
Big Brother, while desiring eternal rule, also dreads the power vacuum that his death would cause. Although he secretly believes in the usefulness of popular religions, he repeatedly suppresses every religious group to protect his power from being usurped. Constrained by international pressure and facing a growing underground religious population, he dares not send these believers to “Ideological Correction Centers.” Instead, he weakens their commitment to repentance by substituting it with charity and acts of kindness while discouraging them from pursuing freedom and lofty ideals. To maintain the system, he begins to let high-ranking officials hoard resources, further intensifying social inequality—leaving ordinary people exhausted from mere survival and unable to secure a new life through faith.

3. **The “Chronic Death” of Society:**

Under such a system, Oceania slips into a peculiar “stability”:

The wealthy lead extravagant, debauched lives, reveling in indulgence;

The poor, meanwhile, numb themselves in pain, utterly losing any courage to pursue freedom. A small, affluent elite maintains its privileges through “loyalty funds” and special citizen status, while the lower masses, long exploited, eventually even forget what it means to resist.



Continuing Chapter Three: The Return of Faith and the Birth of a New Religion

Just as Oceania’s society is on the brink of complete collapse, a new faith begins to emerge quietly. It fuses the core Christian teachings of love and forgiveness—which emphasize caring for others—with the introspection and self-discipline central to Buddhism, a cornerstone of Oceania’s traditional culture. In

doing so, it overturns two millennia of tradition, casting Confucian thought—which stands in opposition to the world’s mainstream culture—as refuse in the historical trash heap. Believers call this new faith “Yephota” (combining “Ye-” as in Jesus and “Photo,” a homophone for light and Buddha, with “-ta” implying acts of kindness toward others). It signifies “the light of Jesus and love for others,” and symbolizes that the birth of this new religion brings spiritual illumination and redemption.

1. **“Yephota”: A Faith of Salvation:**

- **Core Doctrine:** The Yephota faith holds that Jesus Christ is the Creator of all things and the ultimate savior of humanity; meanwhile, the introspection and self-discipline intrinsic to Buddhist culture help adherents gain a deeper understanding of themselves and of others.

- **Practical Principle:** “Yephota” (which implies selfless service) becomes the central tenet. Believers, guided by Christ, strive to act with care toward others.

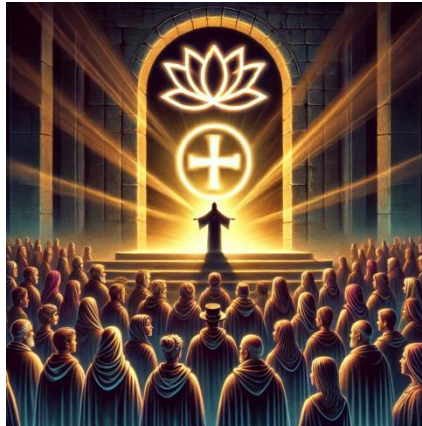
- **Cultural Fusion:** This new faith interweaves popular Buddhist rituals and cultural practices in Oceania with the love and forgiveness of Christianity. It quickly spreads among the people, offering spiritual solace to those suffering under the fragmented state of religion in later-era Oceania, and rekindles a hope for a free life and integration into global culture.

2. **Underground Dissemination:**

Missionaries secretly spread the teachings of Yephota via highly encrypted signal networks. Using clandestine methods—alongside traditional preaching—they successfully evade the surveillance of Oceania’s Thought Police, enabling rapid dissemination. Believers can gather and worship at various locations because Yephota’s “quantum communication” technology has far outpaced Big Brother’s “electronic screen” surveillance. Yephota adherents can sense the emotional shifts of their fellow believers and, using quantum transfer and even mere eye contact, encourage one another to break free from the fear imposed by Big Brother.

3. **Reexamining the Truth behind “Compulsory Education”:**
The Yephota missionaries openly denounce the essence of Big Brother’s “education system” as a “slave-making project.”

- **Contrast of Truth and Lies:** Using teachings from the Bible and Buddhist scriptures, they illustrate that education should serve to inspire wisdom, not to manufacture slaves.
- **A Call for Awakening:** More and more people begin to wonder why they have never questioned Big Brother's orders—or, if they have, why they haven't shown love through action for the sake of others, to secure a life of freedom and courage.



Continuation of Chapter Four: A Revolution Without Guns or Ammunition

1. The Counterattack of Technology: When the Electronic Screens Are No Longer Mere Surveillance Tools

The rise of the Technological Alliance began to unravel Big Brother's regime. Cavin—an engineer who once served the system and had grown up in humble circumstances—after encountering the faith of “Yephota” (explained later) resolutely chose to betray the establishment. Cavin, originally an ordinary man from the lower ranks, deliberately took an extremely dangerous path and became a “traitor” to the system. During a routine system maintenance, his team successfully cracked the core data stream, transforming the electronic screens from mere monitoring devices into windows that exposed the truth. Soon, every household's screen began to display images that the common people had never seen before:

- **The Record of Suffering:** Scenes showed impoverished families losing loved ones because they could not afford medical

care; children fell ill in environments contaminated by toxic food without any available remedy.

- **The Contrast of Extravagance:** Visuals depicted the elite indulging in lavish, debauched lifestyles in luxurious mansions while using “legally obtained organs” from the lower class to extend their lives.

- **A Silent Accusation:** Footage revealed how ordinary people, exhausted and numb, turned against one another by reporting neighbors and even family members disputing over a meager share of leftovers.

In one live broadcast, a high-ranking official lavishly celebrated after receiving an organ obtained illegally through transplants. This scene shocked the entirety of Oceania, and for many, it was the first time they realized that the price they had paid to sustain the system far exceeded their wildest imaginations.

Cavin reworked the facial recognition system into what he termed a “corruption detector,” exposing the dark underbelly of the ruling class. When the bribery records of a mid-level official were publicly displayed before the entire city, it triggered a split and internal strife within that department. By using technology in reverse, the people began to see that “Big Brother is not invincible.”

2. The Power of Faith’s Awakening: The Rise of “Yephota”

The people are not unaware of the oppression of totalitarianism, nor are they without anger; rather, the heavy burdens of life and family responsibilities have forced them into silence. However, the emergence of “Yephota”—this new faith—began to change everything.

- **The Conflict Between Faith and Responsibility:** Initially, many believers who encountered “Yephota” sought only comfort and relief from life’s pain. Yet, as missionaries encouraged them, many gradually developed genuine faith and courage. For example, a widow named Martha, after her husband was killed in an organ trafficking scheme, had once lost hope and wished only to raise her child. She said to a missionary, “I cannot afford to lose my child; I do not have the strength to fight back.” The

missionary replied, “The light of Yephota is given so that you may have strength—not only to love your child but also to love those who, like you, have lost everything.” In the end, Martha led her village in organizing the first tax-resistance protest, refusing to pay unreasonable levies imposed by the powerful.

- **The Spiritual Practice of the “Yephota Tower”:** The “Yephota Tower” is not meant to induce blind sacrifice; rather, it guides people to find the inner courage required to bring hope to others. Believers, through mutual support, repaired houses and shared food so that impoverished neighbors were no longer left isolated. Through their collective effort, some communities freed themselves from reliance on Big Brother’s material allocations and began constructing self-sufficient lifestyles. This was not only a liberation on the material front but also the beginning of mutual trust and unity among the people.

3. The Collapse of the Regime: From Internal Schisms to Total Disintegration

Big Brother, during a surgery to replace his aging organs, completely lost all signs of life and became a “physically healthy” living dead, maintained only by tubes that kept his brainwaves nearly in a straight line. Even so, his image and voice continued to be broadcast on every electronic screen, as if he had never vanished. The news of his “death” stirred immense excitement among the people, yet what ultimately led to the collapse of the regime was the combined power of renewed faith and technology.

- **The Paralysis of the Bureaucratic Machine:** Mid-level officials, fearing exposure for corruption, began to work passively. Some even used their power discreetly to help citizens escape the regime’s oppression.

- **The Collective Action of the People:** Under the call of Yephota, workers went on strike; farmers refused to pay taxes; and teachers refused to deliver the deceptive “compulsory education” curriculum. The entire nation slipped into a state of “non-cooperation,” and the immense machine upon which Big Brother depended eventually ground to a halt.

4. The Polarization of the People: The Awakened Versus the Slumbering

Under Yephota's call, the resistance in Oceania was not universal but split between those who awakened and those who remained asleep. The awakened are those who chose to accept reality, recognized the true nature of Big Brother and his underlying structure, and followed Yephota. They possess independent thinking and the courage to act. However, a considerable number of people, despite living under the same conditions, have become acclimated to Oceania's totalitarian system and even feel a sense of attachment to it. These are the "perfect subjects" molded by the system, raised from childhood under relentless propaganda, so accustomed to obedience that they cannot envision a world without Big Brother.

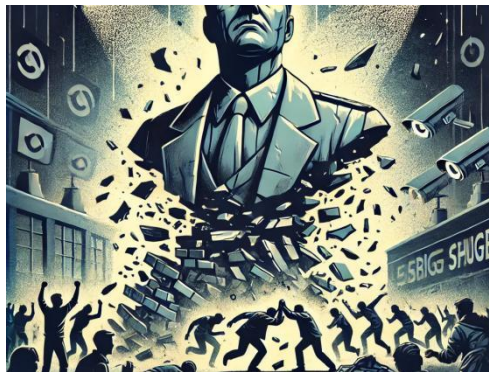
5. The Inertia of the Regime: The Incurable Segment

Even after 60–70 years of imprisoning thoughts and language, some people have spent their lives in a prison-like existence but still refuse to believe the truths repeatedly proclaimed by Yephota and his followers; they stubbornly reject reality. Their thinking has been so thoroughly shaped by a logic in which "2+2=5" that they continue to take pride in the advanced national defense showcased by Big Brother. Even after Oceania's collapse, they remain trapped in their cognitive prisons, ghost-like, on the fringes of the new era. Their characteristics include:

- **Dependency on the Regime:** They cannot imagine a society that is not controlled by Big Brother—even if they suffer under authoritarian oppression, they consider it normal.
- **Fear of Freedom:** When true freedom arrives, they become disoriented, for their entire lives have been built on submission.
- **Denial of Reality:** Even when confronted with the collapse of Oceania or the success of Yephota, they prefer to believe it is part of a "great conspiracy" rather than admit that they have been deceived all their lives.

6. The Impact of the “Non-Cooperation” Movement: The Collapse of the Totalitarian Machine

Although not everyone has awakened, the power of those who have is sufficient to destroy the totalitarian machine that Big Brother relied on. Under Yephota’s leadership, workers stopped working, farmers refused taxes, and teachers declined to teach the deceptive “compulsory education” curriculum. The entire nation fell into a state of “non-cooperation.” No one repaired the electronic screens; no one falsified data for the “Ministry of Truth”; no one carried out interrogations in the “Ministry of Human Affection”; and even the police gradually laid down their weapons. Those still loyal to Oceania could only remain in empty offices, waiting for orders from Big Brother that never came—and when those orders ceased, their world began to crumble.



Continuation of Chapter Five: The Dawn of a New Society

Oceania’s totalitarian system eventually collapsed, and Yephota along with his followers established a new society. This nation is no longer called Oceania; it has been reborn under the name “Heavenly Kingdom National Assembly.” Centered on the faith of Yephota, this new society achieves fairness and freedom through community autonomy and the public application of technology. For the first time, the people truly have a voice, and technology is no longer an instrument of oppression but a tool to improve life. Cavin’s sacrifice became a symbol of the new society, inspiring countless people to face the future with courage and love.

1. The Dominance of Faith

“Yephota” has become the core faith of the new society, based on the principles of “love your neighbor as yourself” and “put others first,” thereby rebuilding the inner morality of the people:

- **Social Practice:** Believers no longer solely pursue personal spiritual elevation but engage in public service, education, and healthcare to help others overcome poverty and despair.
- **Cultural Integration:** This new faith combines the forgiveness of Christianity with the introspection of Buddhism, emphasizing the moderation of material desires and spiritual richness.

2. The Public Benefit of Technology

Technologies that were once used to oppress and control are now redesigned to improve public welfare. The Technological Alliance has developed an efficient medical system ensuring equal access to healthcare for all. Education has been redefined as “inspiring potential” rather than “producing conformists;” this new nation is no longer built upon fear and surveillance but on freedom, truth, and independent thought.

3. The Budding of Democracy

This new society is founded upon community autonomy, with local elections replacing the centralized bureaucratic system. Ordinary people now have the right to participate directly in decision-making, and power becomes gradually more transparent. All community service personnel are drawn from the system and are periodically evaluated and replaced. The communities of post-Oceania have become interconnected, with every area of people’s life and economic exchange managed and operated by advanced AI systems. The responsibility of the community managers is to supervise the fairness of these operations, ensuring that all citizens can live peacefully, freely, and joyfully on this land, enjoying the grace of Jesus Christ throughout their lives. People can freely communicate with others from different countries, travel between nations, and even traverse between Earth and space—collectively witnessing the grace of God’s creation.

Meanwhile, those who had once been subjects of Big Brother—though now residing in this new world—still find themselves unable to adapt to freedom. They continually long for the old order and even attempt to resurrect past lifestyles. Over time, their fate is sealed, and they eventually become abandoned by the new era, gradually perishing as society advances.

The rulers of the “Heavenly Kingdom National Assembly” are no longer the despots of Oceania who, for over 3,000 years, paved their way to the throne with the corpses of the people and extorted wealth through ruthless means. Instead, they are the leaders of a brand-new nation under Yephota’s guidance—a nation that has already integrated into the global community.

As mentioned earlier, Cavin’s story runs throughout this narrative. He is a typical “contradiction of human nature” who journeyed from awakening to redemption and ultimately sacrificed himself for the people of Oceania; he is a hero to all the people.

Cavin was born into poverty and fully understood the oppression of the system. Yet, in order to support his family, he became an engineer working on the surveillance system. He knew that his work only deepened the system’s oppression, but he had no alternative. By chance, he encountered the teachings of “Yephota,” and for the first time, he realized that his abilities could be used to help others. His journey of faith was not immediate; it was forged through profound inner struggle. Cavin once said to a missionary, “I cannot sacrifice my family to help strangers.” The missionary replied, “When you bring light to others, your family too will live in that light.” These words provided Cavin with immense comfort. Later, during a daring operation, Cavin was arrested and ultimately sacrificed himself in an “Ideological Correction Center.” Yet, his life became the turning point for the revolution that brought down Oceania, and his luminous example of faith spread throughout the nation. He became a symbolic figure of the new society.



Continuation: Epilogue – A Mother’s Hope

In a field, a mother once told her child the story of Cavin: “Do you know? Cavin wasn’t a great man—he simply did what every ordinary person is too afraid to do. Freedom isn’t a gift; it is a choice.”

This rebellion was not a revolution of mass awakening but rather a split based on differences in perception. Those who were willing to accept the truth pushed society forward; those who indulged in totalitarian lies were left behind by history. Even after the fall of Oceania, they remain prisoners of their own thoughts, and true freedom will always belong only to those who dare to think and act.

Since this is a continuation, there will inevitably be omissions and gaps—readers are welcome to supplement and revise as needed. But real change requires more than merely moving one’s fingers; it demands repentance, courage, and sacrifice.

Is Short - Sightedness Caused by a Lack of True Faith?

A few years ago, I first saw a friend spending 20–30 minutes on Douyin (TikTok) back in 2019. At the time, I was busy with work and dared not try it. Not only did I avoid Douyin myself, but I also advised my colleagues to steer clear, feeling it wasted too much time. However, later when apps like WeChat and Weibo introduced their own short video sections, I too gradually began watching short videos—so much so that I couldn’t pull myself away. Eventually, I realized that the platform was simply “feeding” me with content that failed to meet the deeper needs of my soul. This led me to recognize that although many short videos are well produced and may even touch our hearts, they are ultimately external things; even if they provide quick audiovisual gratification, they cannot satisfy the hunger of one’s soul. When you grow accustomed to being absorbed in “other people’s performances,” a kind of short-sightedness is quietly formed. Today, let us examine how short-sightedness manifests throughout a person’s life.

I. Short-Sightedness on a Personal Level: Without Faith, Life Is Bound to Go Astray

Let’s begin with health. Many people boast “youth is capital” even as they risk their lives chasing career success. They chant “996 is a blessing” while their bodies gradually “break down.” Only when red warnings from medical reports spread like battle notices do they start chugging goji berry juice, taking health supplements, practicing gym exercises, or doing eight-section brocade. Yet the body is not merely a tool that can be replaced once worn out; lacking reverence for the true value of life and long-term planning, one can only end up having to pay an exorbitant price to make up for short-term “savings.”

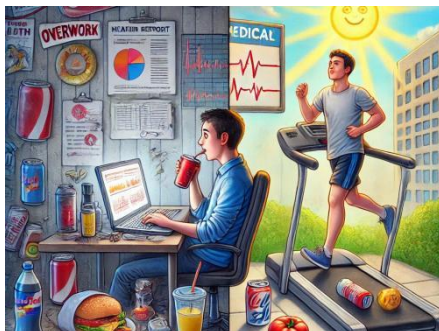
Electric scooters provide another laughable yet painful example. At purchase, one might think they are environmentally friendly and save money—plus with government subsidies it seems a win-win deal. And many such scooters, like the “knockoffs” that emerged 20 years ago, brim with every flashy feature, resembling

a big toy. Yet come holiday season or during Spring Festival travel, the long charging lines at service areas brutally expose the harsh reality. To save a few hundred yuan on fuel, one ends up spending half a day queuing for a charge; while chasing the label of an “eco-leader,” one overlooks the unresolved issue of battery pollution. The problem is that many people, in making their decisions, only see the subsidies and completely ignore the many practical difficulties encountered during use.

Education and young people’s career choices are also filled with short-sighted stories. Parents, in order to help their children get into prestigious schools, enroll them in endless tutoring classes—depriving the children of the freedom to explore their own interests and develop naturally. In the career realm, many chase “hot industries” solely to earn money quickly, only to later find that their careers have not truly allowed them to grow. After starting a family with strong parental support, they soon become shackled by family and child-rearing responsibilities, only to later discover that their children are repeating the same patterns. And they are also repeating the mistakes of their parents to cultivate themselves, and they have no time to talk about the pursuit of their lives and the placement of their souls. Life without the guidance of faith is like duckweed without roots, which can only go with the flow, and generation after generation repeats itself as a tool of power and capital, seemingly successful, but in fact it has contributed their life's work to them.

The health of the mood and soul is seriously neglected, and the emotions that cannot be released can only "accumulate into illness", and until the last journey of life, they have to contribute the balance to the country's medical cause. Many people never think about "what is the meaning of my life", "where my soul belongs", and "why am I not happy andfree?" The so-called faith is to follow the "earnest teachings" of parents, to be obedient children, and not to pursue the Redeemer who truly frees himself from sin. ~~ Have you ever thought that those powerful people who take care of you just like you like this? The lack of faith leads people to unconsciously copy the wrong habits in the family, and even be pushed away by invisible pressures

and anxieties, and eventually become slaves to the short-term interests of personal selfish desires and the long-term interests of power capital.



II. Short-Sightedness in Families: The Cost of Neglecting Faith on Happiness

Within families, the absence of faith is directly reflected in short-sighted approaches to education and upbringing. Many parents themselves have never been raised with the proper worldview or values, and consequently, most children become little byproducts of their parents' misguided priorities. When parents, unprepared in body, mind, and spirit, hurriedly bring the next generation into this world, they inadvertently instill a system in which the lack of genuine faith permits an acceptance of trivial, immediate concerns over long-term vision. In a family without a reverence for the Most High, everyday matters are given undue importance, and short-sightedness quickly escalates into a lack of a truly free perspective.

Consider this: parents who lack reverence for God often insist, "I'm doing this for the sake of my children," yet in reality, they treat their children as mere instruments of their own achievements. Children, overwhelmed by endless tutoring and exam pressures, have their innate pursuits stifled—resulting in parents who, through their own suppression, inadvertently rob their children of the joy of growing up. When such children grow into adults, they find themselves without independent thought or a solid system of values—the family thus loses its foundational happiness, and the cycle seems destined to repeat.

Another example is how families handle spending. In many cases, parents exhaust all their savings on an ostentatious "appearance

project” like decorating a house instead of investing time and money in achieving genuine freedom and joy. Or consider how parents might overextend themselves to buy a house for their children, thereby sacrificing their own quality of life, which in turn weakens family relationships due to economic strain.

Marital relationships are often even more short-sighted. When marriages are built solely on material conditions, little attention is paid to whether spouses’ values and characters are compatible. Consequently, marriages become “partnerships of convenience” rather than bonds based on genuine love. When there is a lack of deep communication about values and shared faith, it becomes increasingly difficult for a family to remain united during tough times. If you are a married couple past fifty who haven’t even engaged in meaningful discussions about the true meaning of life, have you truly experienced the joy that comes from understanding life’s purpose?



III. Short-Sightedness in Business: Without Faith, Enterprises Lose Their Soul

The root cause of short-sightedness in business lies in a lack of value-based guidance. Bosses focus on monthly or quarterly profit margins and exhort employees, “Work hard, and you’ll turn your fortunes around!” While workers are pumped with “chicken blood” (motivation), they gradually burn out under extreme work demands and fierce internal competition, ultimately sapping their drive and loyalty. Talented individuals leave, and the long-term competitiveness of mediocre yet resilient employees naturally suffers.

In production, short-sighted cost-cutting can lead to compromised product quality and recurrent issues that destroy a brand’s reputation. Some companies recklessly expand without

enhancing managerial skill or service quality, ultimately facing the embarrassment of losing customers.

Even more troubling is that under the heavy pressure from upper management, companies are unable to execute their inherent social responsibilities. Such behaviors fail to win employees' respect and support; relationships between employees and their companies deteriorate from shared bonds to bare conflicts, even to hostility. Business leaders are not unaware of these consequences, but under the "boss is larger than all" logic, the potential of personal faith is rarely allowed to play any role in the struggle between short-term individual profit and long-term capital interests. Employees, therefore, prefer immediate gain. When we say that corporate development lacks faith, we are really recognizing that every corner of this society is lacking a foundation of true faith—and the same goes for government governance. Enterprises without a proper faith foundation will not last; even if they do, they will resemble walking corpses.

IV. Short-Sightedness in Government: Without Faith, Governance Becomes Formalism

Short-sighted governance is strikingly evident in government. Many local governments are eager to build "face projects," spending enormous funds on flashy landmark buildings while neglecting basic public needs such as rural healthcare and education. Ordinary people continue to suffer amidst toxic food scandals—even my high school "underachiever" classmates can easily recite the Chinese names of over a dozen chemical compounds found in food. These profit-driven models, which defy basic common-sense regarding food and health, have shattered global trust in our governance. At the root of these issues lies a lack of faith: the personal dearth of true belief among government officials. The collective failure of individuals has led to rampant formalism, where orders from above become the sole "credo" while the actual needs of the people are completely ignored.

Short-sighted management in the healthcare system is equally distressing. Grassroots medical resources are scarce, and issues

such as the difficulty and expense of treatment in major hospitals remain unresolved for a long time. Compared with the evils of capitalism, many people have spent their lives scrimping and saving only to deplete their savings on hospital bills. Moreover, during the pandemic two years ago, the ruthless adherence to top-down orders by the public health system and the indifferent treatment of the populace exposed a stark reality: “We must listen to our superiors—if a patient needs emergency care without a nucleic acid test, it is none of our business!”

Do you not know that, as medical personnel, you too need services from other industries? If you do not care for the safety of others, then your friends, relatives, and even your children will eventually face similar fates.

If healthcare issues hold our necks, then food safety problems grip our stomachs. Regulatory loopholes—left unchecked due to a lack of true faith—allow toxic food products to flow into the market, once again forcing the public toward healthcare and perpetuating the cycle of cold, heartless medical treatment. Certain officials in government even choose selective blindness, placing profit above the safety of the people—even that of their own families. How can such self-deception persist among those from the same soil?

V. Paths to Overcome Short-Sightedness: True Christian Faith Is the Ultimate Answer—But Not Merely a Slogan

Escaping the trap of short-sightedness depends not on a few inspirational quotes or catchy slogans but on a genuine transformation in both our thinking and our behavior. If every person in a society measures everything solely by short-term gains without considering life, the soul, and the future, the problem will spiral into a vicious cycle. Here, faith is not a mere decorative tool; it is the critical key to breaking free from “the here and now” and discovering life’s deeper meaning.

At the personal level: We must reexamine the true meaning of “success.” It is not measured merely by the money we earn or the material possessions we accumulate, but by whether we are engaging in activities that truly bring peace to our souls.

Christian faith helps us understand the true value of life, and it reminds us to weigh long-term significance when facing choices. For example, when deciding to buy an electric vehicle, consider whether it really meets your needs; when investing in health, pursue genuine balance and well-being rather than quick fixes.

Within the family: A process of “mental upgrading” must begin. Parents need to realize that their children are not simply instruments for fulfilling their own unaccomplished dreams but are individuals with independent souls imbued with a God-given mission. Faith teaches that every life comes with a purpose. Rather than pressuring children to achieve the top scores, it is better to help them discover what they love, enabling them to become people who make a meaningful contribution to society, rather than merely competing in terms of academics or wealth. Family happiness is not built on a pile of money but through the bond of faith, mutual understanding, and shared goals.

In the enterprise: Companies must adopt a broader perspective. Short-sightedness causes an enterprise to lose its soul. Even if current circumstances require strict adherence to organizational leadership, only Christian faith can provide an enterprise with long-term vitality. Employers should respect their employees, treat customers well, and emphasize social responsibility, thereby earning genuine respect. Bosses need not drive their employees to “overwork” daily; rather, every decision in the company should reflect long-term value and responsibility—to employees as well as society.

In government: The core of true faith is “reverence for heaven and love for people.” Governing a nation is about more than merely achieving GDP targets. It is about enabling citizens to find a sense of belonging in spirit. This is not just a matter of building roads or erecting buildings; it involves long-term planning and continuous investment to solve issues such as food safety, fair healthcare, and environmental protection. A government’s responsibility is not to mechanically execute orders but to govern in a humane way that provides its people with dignity and hope. Remember that those you govern include not

only strangers but also your own friends and relatives—and these are the very hopes of the next generation.

Conclusion: Faith Leads the Path to the Future—Change Begins at Our Feet

Short-sightedness is like a slow-acting poison, gradually eroding the soul of the individual, the family, and society day by day. Although we may not be able to change the overall situation immediately, we can begin by awakening in every detail—from our personal health choices to our family educational values; from the way businesses are managed to the governing philosophy of our state, every step represents a beginning for change.

Faith is not a constraint but the wisdom to see the future clearly and to live fully in the present. It is not dogma but a guide that helps us think with a broader vision, freeing us from the fog of immediate concerns and taking responsibility for the future.

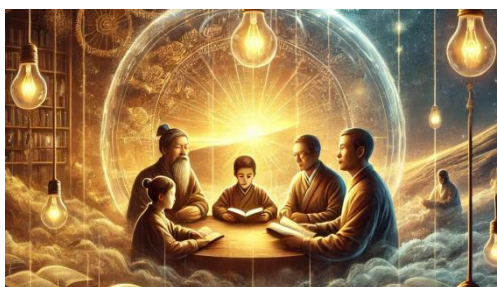
So, my friends, when you feel lost, ask yourself: Where does your soul find its rest? When you are at peace with the answer, you have already stepped out of the maze of short-sightedness and onto the path of a truly free life.

The Awakening of Free Thought in Pursuit of Freedom: From Hayek, Voltaire to Orwell

To many, the problems of authoritarian societies appear to be merely issues of political leadership—as if simply changing the leader or even the entire system would bring about change. History, however, teaches us that without a fundamental transformation in culture, thought, and institutions, a new authoritarian regime is nothing more than a continuation of the old. True freedom is not granted by one person; it is built upon the awakening of thought and a revolution in social consciousness. In simple terms, the realm you see and pursue is determined by the state of your inner world.

Hayek, in *The Road to Serfdom*, warned that the formation of totalitarian regimes is not the accidental product of any one party but the result of a society's long-term acceptance of oppressive rule and the abandonment of individual liberty. Voltaire stressed that freedom of thought is more important than violent revolution because thought directs the course of society. Orwell, in *1984*, reveals the deeper workings of totalitarianism—by controlling language and thought, people come to accept their own shackles willingly. Together, these thinkers show that real social transformation begins with the awakening of the individual, not merely through a change in regime.

So, in today's authoritarian society, how can we promote such an awakening? How can people search for light amid darkness and awaken themselves and those around them?



I. Enlightenment of Thought: Igniting Independent Thinking That Has Been Suppressed

In a closed environment, people rarely realize they are imprisoned because the cage has long been internalized as the boundaries of thought. Hayek points out that if a society does not cultivate independent thinking but only obeys government directives, it is destined to slide into tyranny and totalitarianism. Voltaire stated bluntly that “those who do not think are the greatest enemies of freedom.”

In an authoritarian society, many people no longer actively think about social issues. Instead, they accept the “standard answers” or simply avoid reality altogether, numbing themselves with entertainment. Yet genuine freedom must begin with independent thought.

1. **Relearning to Think:**

Many people in authoritarian societies become accustomed to accepting “standard answers” and rarely analyze the roots of issues. For example:

- Why do housing prices soar while wages fail to keep pace with inflation?
- Why are healthcare and education costs growing while they become the scapegoats for powerful interests?
- Why is access to information controlled unlawfully?
- Why does joining one political party preclude you from holding another religious belief—while others seemingly have no such restrictions?
- Why do we always expect “good leaders” rather than focusing on whether the system itself is reasonable?

The answers to these questions cannot be found in the propaganda of authoritarian regimes—they require us to read, discuss, and reflect on our own. The first step of intellectual enlightenment is to learn to ask questions and refuse to listen to only one voice.

2. **Discussing and Disseminating Ideas:**

Hayek’s ideas on free-market economics, Voltaire’s spirit of enlightenment, and Orwell’s critique of totalitarianism may be difficult to circulate directly in our country. However, they can be spread gradually through private reading groups, small discussion circles, and conversations among friends and family.

Even in ordinary conversations, one might guide others to think by asking questions such as:

- “To what extent should the government control personal life?”
- “Which is more important: freedom of speech or social stability?”
- “Who should have the power to limit government authority?”

3. Though these discussions may appear insignificant, each is a seed that, once planted and nurtured, can influence a person’s thinking.

4. **Embracing Diverse Information:**

In authoritarian societies, information blockage is key to maintaining control. Orwell’s *1984* introduces “Newspeak” to illustrate that when people have only a restricted vocabulary, their ability to think critically is stifled. Many of the language control strategies in authoritarian regimes continue this trend, such as “sensitive word censorship” and the generalization of “historical nihilism,” which deprive people of the language needed to discuss reality in depth. True enlightenment requires breaking through this information blockade, reading multiple perspectives, comparing histories and realities of various nations, rather than accepting a single narrative. Websites with foreign language content, translated books, and international news are all important tools for breaking out of one’s informational cocoon.

II. The Symbolism of Freedom: The Struggle from Darkness to Light

Freedom is not given from above; it is pursued by seeking the light in darkness. Hayek emphasized that totalitarian regimes will not vanish on their own—they persist because people comply with them. Orwell warned that the most frightening aspect is not the government’s surveillance but that people willingly accept it, even defending it. In authoritarian societies, some even expect the surveillance network to help locate their missing loved ones—doesn’t that sound absurd?

In today's authoritarian society, people accept totalitarian control not because they enjoy being controlled, but because they fear the uncertainty that true freedom brings. Many would rather accept "stable oppression" than risk challenging it. However, genuine social transformation must come from individuals bravely stepping out of the darkness to pursue the light.

1. Breaking the Blind Trust in Authority:

Long-standing cultural traditions, Confucian teachings, nationalism, and patriotic propaganda have instilled in many the idea that "the state is supreme and the individual must obey." This mindset leads to:

- Individual rights being considered secondary until trampled upon, while state interests are absolute.
- People being too afraid to act independently and thus waiting for "leadership instructions."
- A tendency to keep silent about government mistakes, sometimes even defending them.

Yet, a truly free society must be built on questioning authority. Hayek argued that governmental power must be supervised by its citizens; otherwise, it will inevitably expand and eventually devour individual freedom. Each of us has a duty to ask, "To what limits should governmental power be constrained?" If we fail to supervise power, ultimately we will all become slaves to it.

2. From Personal Awakening to Social Awakening:

Social change is never top-down but begins with individual awakening that gradually spreads. As more people begin to think, question, and discuss, the collective atmosphere shifts. This change may be slow, but once it starts, it is irreversible.

III. A Metaphor for Social Transformation: Awakening from Slumber

The transformation of an authoritarian society is not a one-time event but a long-term process. Today, our authoritarian society remains in a kind of collective slumber; yet not everyone is completely unconscious. Increasing numbers of people begin to question the legitimacy of the current system and seek true freedom. In an authoritarian society, what can people do?

1. **Intellectual Enlightenment:** As Voltaire said, “I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it.” This encapsulates the essence of intellectual freedom. We need to foster the reawakening of thought through reading, discussion, and reflection, encouraging those around us to reconsider the relationship between power, institutional structures, and individual freedom. Even under immense pressure, private reading circles and family discussions can help spread the seeds of enlightenment.
2. **Cultivating Independent Thought:** According to Hayek, independent thought is the core of a free society. By engaging in discussions on topics like economics and education—non-political topics—we can help people uncover the root causes of issues. For example, one might ask: “Why can’t young people afford housing?” or “Why is healthcare so burdensome?” Such issues, approached from the perspective of people’s livelihoods, make it easier for the public to accept new ways of thinking.
3. **Establishing Small Civic Societies: Starting at the Community Level:** Social transformation often starts small. Initiatives such as community mutual help projects and public welfare activities can gradually cultivate a sense of cooperation and responsibility among people. For example, organizing activities to help underprivileged families or hosting educational lectures for children may seem simple, but they build the collective capacity for change.
4. **Reflecting on the Power of Language: Refuse to Be Defined by Others:** Orwell reminded us that language shapes thought. We need to re-examine those words that have been abused and learn to express our thoughts clearly. When talking with others, consider asking questions instead of presenting conclusions—this can help stimulate others to think for themselves.
5. **Educating the Next Generation: Planting Seeds of Freedom in the Home:** Social transformation takes time, but change can begin with the next generation. Parents can encourage their children to read, write, and express their

opinions from an early age, fostering habits of independent thought. Hayek emphasized that the future of a free society depends on the quality of its next-generation citizens.

Conclusion: The Light of Freedom Will Eventually Illuminate the Darkness

Hayek reminds us that the road to serfdom is gradual, while the road to freedom requires the courage to awaken. Voltaire teaches that freedom of thought is the precondition for social transformation. Orwell warns that if we do not resist the control of thought, we will remain forever in the shadow of totalitarianism.

The future of authoritarian societies will not be determined by a single leader but by the millions of individuals who gradually awaken. True freedom is not something that is given to us—it begins with each one of us. In our modern society, a popular saying is: “Take care of your own business; do not idolize or look down on others.” It may seem like the wisdom of a pragmatist, but isn’t this exactly what those who benefit from the status quo desire? Such a state of being is hardly what freedom should look like.

Let us join together in prayer.

Appendix: Brief Introductions to the Works on Freedom by Hayek, Voltaire, and Orwell

Hayek

- *The Road to Serfdom*: In this influential work, Hayek argued that the planned welfare state was not for the sake of individual freedom but a step toward authoritarianism. His ideas reiterate his commitment to classical liberalism as a counter to planned economies.
- *The Constitution of Liberty*: Divided into three parts, this book delves deeply into the nature, value, and interrelation of freedom with law, economics, and society. Hayek criticizes the socialist planning model and emphasizes the importance of market mechanisms, offering insights on social security, taxation, and monetary policies.

- *Law, Legislation and Liberty*: After 17 years of thought, this is Hayek's final systematic work on liberal theory, synthesizing his reflections on law and freedom, and constructing his grand philosophy of a liberal society.

Voltaire

Although Voltaire's works span many fields including philosophy, politics, and literature, his direct discussions on freedom—especially in his philosophical and political writings—are well-known. For example:

- *Letters on England* (also known as *Philosophical Letters*): In this work, Voltaire summarizes his observations and insights from his time in England, praising the achievements of the English bourgeois revolution and criticizing the despotic regime in France, reflecting a deep longing for freedom.
- *On Freedom* (selections from his writings in his *Philosophical Dictionary*): Although not a stand-alone work, these excerpts elucidate his ideas on freedom, advocating that while all are equal, freedom has its conditions and cannot exceed the limits set by law.

Orwell

- *1984*: This classic dystopian novel, with its profound political allegory and steadfast defense of freedom, remains a unique literary masterpiece. The novel portrays a society in which individual freedom is utterly stripped away and thought is strictly controlled. Orwell, through the eyes of his protagonist, illustrates the perversion of human nature under totalitarian rule and the blind pursuit of power, offering a stark critique of totalitarianism and expressing a deep reverence for true freedom.

In summary, these three thinkers offer rich and varied perspectives on freedom through their respective works. Their writings provide profound intellectual resources and insights for readers seeking to understand the essence of freedom.

Imagine Orwell Continuing to Write 1984: Special Edition on Oceania's Ideological Berlin Walls

The function of a wall is to separate. It can divide a nation into two camps, block the flow of freedom, and cause people to live in entirely different worlds. Although the Berlin Wall fell five years after the events of *1984*, new walls remain in Oceania. They are invisible yet palpable—not only spanning national borders but also existing as separations in information, thought, entry and exit, class, and regional divisions. These walls are even more covert and harder to cross than the Berlin Wall.

However, the existence of these “walls” is not accidental, nor are they purportedly erected “for the sake of the people’s welfare.” Behind them lies a set of privileged edicts that reign above the constitution, ensuring that power remains exclusively in the hands of a select few while ordinary people are forever unable to climb over. Although the constitution proclaims that “the people have rights,” the privileged system reduces those rights to empty words on a piece of paper.

Under Big Brother’s rule, Oceania has long transcended the notion of physical walls. It no longer needs to rely on brute force or physical blockades to control its citizens; instead, it has constructed an invisible “information cocoon” that keeps everyone’s thoughts confined within an intangible prison from which they can never escape.

Within this information cocoon, what people see, hear, and even think is all carefully pre-designed. There is no longer any need to build walls along national or city borders; instead, they are built in people’s minds. Everyone lives in a curated, filtered, and revised bubble, believing they see the whole world, while in reality, they only see the illusions that the rulers want them to see.

This wall of information is far more impregnable than a physical barrier—and it is even less noticeable because most people do not even realize that they are confined within it.

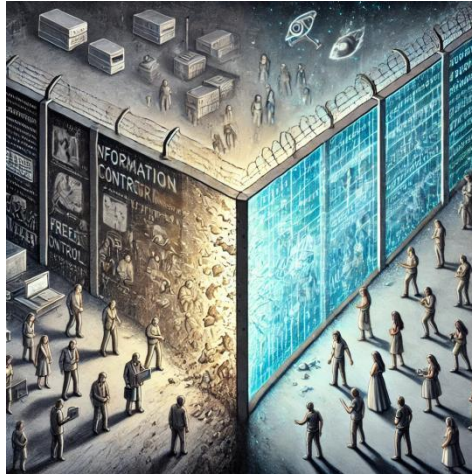
Chapter One: Digital Firewalls – The One-Way Flow of Information

Though the world is interconnected and information flows freely elsewhere, in Oceania many remain trapped on a false island. The constitution states that “citizens have freedom of speech.” However, in Oceania’s online world, information freedom is never a right for the public but a privilege reserved for a select few.

Big Brother understands that true control does not lie in restricting physical liberty but in limiting the freedom of thought. Therefore, he has created a digital wall that guarantees information flows in one direction only—passing only official, sanctioned content—so that every citizen’s worldview is locked into a specific framework.

All external information is filtered; any content that might disrupt “social stability” is blocked, while “correct information” is disseminated on a massive scale. Social media platforms are filled with approved data, and even when people discuss politics, economics, or history, all viewpoints remain confined to an acceptable range. “Circumventing” these walls becomes taboo, and anyone attempting to break through the information blockade will have their behavior recorded and be labeled an “ideological contaminator,” subject to re-education.

Those who have never experienced the outside world gradually become accustomed to this environment, never questioning whether the information seen on TV, newspapers, or mainstream online media is genuine. They live as if inside a transparent glass box, believing they are free when in fact the outside world has long been severed from them. (The World Wide Web, for example, in Oceania has become the “Weird Wall Web” – a twisted, internal network that blocks access to the external world.)



Chapter Two: Border Control – The Illusion of Free Movement

The constitution of Oceania declares that “citizens have the freedom to travel.” Yet Big Brother knows that true freedom is not determined by legal text but by whether he allows you to leave. On this land, the right to cross borders is not innate but controlled by a privileged system.

Ordinary citizens must go through cumbersome approvals in order to leave, while the elite have already arranged overseas assets and residence permits, enabling them to leave at a moment’s notice. Even if some possess passports, they might be stopped at airports with a vague “border control” explanation—in essence, only those “authorized” are permitted to step into the realm of freedom.

It is akin to an invisible wall: some may travel freely, while others can only look on longingly. The wall appears to be for national protection but, in reality, is designed to control who can truly enjoy freedom and who is doomed to remain confined.

Chapter Three: Barriers of Thought – The Distortion of Language and History

The constitution proclaims that “citizens have freedom of thought.” Yet, in truth, free thought belongs to only a few; most people are confined to “approved thoughts.” In Oceania, history is never measured by truth but is altered at Big Brother’s whim.

Ordinary citizens are indoctrinated with a single historical narrative, and a controlled education system deprives them of access to the real history. Even each time the dictionary is updated, certain words are deleted or modified, gradually robbing people of the language to describe reality accurately.

Historical records are rewritten continuously. Yesterday's allies may become today's enemies; past failures can be transformed into victories. Acts of resistance against the government are glorified, while widespread protests are suppressed and labeled as riots, all the while citizens are trained to accept these distortions.

Should an ordinary person express an "incorrect opinion," they may be censored, banned, or punished—whereas privileged individuals, no matter how absurd their statements, face no consequences. Any questioning of the official narrative is marked as "erroneous thought" and may incur severe punishment.

When language is manipulated, thought itself is imprisoned. Ultimately, people cease to doubt or ask questions—their thoughts can only operate within the rigid framework set by the authorities, forming a wall of ideas.

Chapter Four: Social Hierarchies and Impenetrable Barriers

In Oceania, while everyone appears equal on the surface, society is in fact divided into distinct classes, and people in different classes live in entirely separate worlds. Even within companies, employees are stratified into long-term and short-term contract holders, yet receive unequal compensation.

Members of the "Inner Party" enjoy absolute freedom—they have access to uncensored information, can travel freely, and enjoy the best education and healthcare available worldwide. "Outer Party" members are granted limited welfare benefits within the system's confines, but they cannot break through the class barriers. The proletariat, the lowest group, is never allowed to see the truth of the world; their lives exist solely to keep the system running.

This wall is far more concealed than the Berlin Wall because it is not constructed of bricks and mortar but rather is built from the

distribution of status, household registration, wealth, and resources—ensuring that people from different classes live in completely separate worlds that they can never cross.

Chapter Five: The Divide Between Law and Reality – The Ultimate Edict of the Privileged System

In Oceania, the law is not meant to protect citizens but to sustain the regime. The constitution proclaims that all citizens' basic rights are equal, but in reality, wealth and power determine everything, and fairness is nothing more than an empty phrase. Ordinary people struggle within their own classes all their lives, while the privileged not only enjoy resources and rights effortlessly but can even cross national borders to enjoy real freedom.

Although the constitution states that citizens enjoy freedom of speech, “erroneous speech” is eliminated and its speakers are punished. The constitution further guarantees judicial independence, yet true judgments are determined by Big Brother and high-ranking party officials—the courts simply serve as executioners. While the law declares equality, under the privileged system, different classes enjoy different rights. Some, even if they break the law, are spared punishment.

Thus, the role of the law is only to give the illusion of protection, while real decision-making power always remains in the hands of a few.

Epilogue: Prisoners in the Cocoon of Information

Inside this vast cocoon of filtered information, people do not see the walls, yet their world is meticulously designed. They believe they are accessing free information, unaware that what they see is heavily curated. They think they have the right to travel, yet true freedom is reserved solely for the privileged. They believe the law will protect them, but in reality, the law is nothing more than a decorative façade. They assume the world is as it appears, but the true world is far broader than they ever imagine.

In *1984*, Oceania became a closed and absolute society. Today, it no longer needs a physical “Berlin Wall” because, within each

person's mind, an even higher and more unyielding wall has been constructed. This wall is invisible yet tangible. It exists in every instance of information censorship, every act of historical rewriting, every imposition on thought, and every deprivation of rights. It is the strongest prison in the world, confining all the people of Oceania so that they never dare to question, never dare to break free, and never dare to leave.

The story of 1984 is not over, and the cocoon of information in Oceania still stands... but that cocoon will soon collapse.

Exodus: A Journey of Faith or the Elimination by Fate?

— A Historical and Contemporary Allegory Concerning Human Choices
In the Bible, the Exodus is not merely a migration of a people—it is also a test of faith. Of the two million Israelites led by Moses, in the end only warriors like Joshua and Caleb entered Canaan while many perished in the wilderness. This event not only shaped the national identity of Israel but also became a classic case study of the trial of faith and human nature.

Yet this history is not just the story of ancient Israel; it also deeply reflects the awakening of human society, the filtering of faith, and the fate of those who remain obstinate. Even today, especially in times of hardship in daily life, similar tests of faith continue to occur. The true challenge is not solely the external hardships resembling a desert wilderness, but the internal choice: Will people accept the truth of faith, or will they remain obstinate and unreceptive even in the face of adversity and miracles?



I. Exodus: The Archetype of the Test of Faith

1. God's Revelation: The Call of Moses

Moses did not lead the Israelites out of Egypt on the basis of personal power, but rather in response to God's call (Exodus 3:10–12). His task was not only to free a group of slaves but also to guide them into becoming truly God's people. However, not all the Israelites accepted Moses' mission:

- They witnessed the Ten Plagues (Exodus 7–12) yet still complained when they faced perishing at the Red Sea (Exodus 14:11–12). They said to Moses, "Then they said to Moses, 'Because there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away

to die in the wilderness? Why have you so dealt with us, to bring us up out of Egypt?” (Exodus 14:11–12, NKJV)

- They had seen the pillar of cloud and pillar of fire (Exodus 13:21–22), yet in the wilderness they did not believe and even fashioned a golden calf (Exodus 32:1–6).

Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days. And no leavened bread shall be seen among you, nor shall leaven be seen among you in all your quarters. And you shall tell your son in that day, saying, ‘ This is done because of what the Lord did for me when I came up from Egypt.’ It shall be as a sign to you on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes, that the Lord ’s law may be in your mouth; for with a strong hand the Lord has brought you out of Egypt. You shall therefore keep this ordinance in its season from year to year. “And it shall be, when the Lord brings you into the land of the Canaanites, as He swore to you and your fathers, and gives it to you, that you shall set apart to the Lord all that open the womb, that is, every firstborn that comes from an animal which you have; the males shall be the Lord ’s. (Exodus 13:7-12 NKJV)

When the people saw that Moses delayed coming down the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said, “*Now when the people saw that Moses delayed coming down from the mountain, the people gathered together to Aaron, and said to him, “Come, make us gods that shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.” And Aaron said to them, “Break off the golden earrings which are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me.” So all the people broke off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them to Aaron. And he received the gold from their hand, and he fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made a molded calf. Then they said, “This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!” So when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, “Tomorrow is a feast to the Lord .” Then they rose early on the next day, offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the*

people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.(Exodus 32:1-6 NKJV)

- They experienced the manna provided by God (Exodus 16:14–15), yet still longed for the meat pot of Egypt (Numbers 11:4–6). When the dew lifted, small, round objects like white frost covered the wilderness. The Israelites looked and asked one another, “What is it?” And Moses said, “This is the bread which the Lord has given you to eat” (Exodus 16:14–15, NKJV, paraphrased) However, driven by greed, the common people began to cry out, “Now the mixed multitude who were among them yielded to intense craving; so the children of Israel also wept again and said: “Who will give us meat to eat? We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; but now our whole being is dried up; there is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes!”” (Numbers 11:4–6, NKJV)

This demonstrates that faith is not merely the outcome of witnessing miracles; it is a matter of proactive acceptance and obedience. Stubborn people, even when confronted with divine signs, do not truly change.

2. The Forty Years in the Wilderness: A Process of Filtering, Not Simply Elimination

The group that Moses led was not a uniform nation but a diverse collection with mixed levels of faith:

- Some were true believers, willing to accept God’s law (like Joshua and Caleb).
- Some were merely carried along by circumstances, with a wait-and-see attitude, unable to endure the test of faith.
- Others—the so-called “mixed multitude” (Numbers 11:4)—were perhaps simply runaways who, in the chaos, merely followed along while secretly longing for the old order of Egypt. God did not immediately eliminate them; instead, He gave them forty years. In Hebrew, forty signifies a considerable span of time. In other words, God provided enough time for people to choose their allegiance:
- They could choose repentance and accept God’s guidance, becoming truly God’s people.

- Or they could continue in unbelief, ultimately perishing in the wilderness and losing their right to enter the Promised Land. This process is not mere elimination but a combination of testing and choice. God's intention was not to destroy them but to teach them to trust (Deuteronomy 8:2–5). When they eventually enter Canaan and look back upon their time in the wilderness, they will understand that God gave everyone enough time to decide and trust.

And you shall remember that the Lord your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord . Your garments did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these forty years. You should know in your heart that as a man chastens his son, so the Lord your God chastens you.(Deuteronomy 8:2-5 NKJV)

II. “Exodus” as a Test in Modern Society

1. The Awakening of Faith in Today's Society: Stepping Out of “Modern Egypt”

Various surveys and data estimate that in China, the percentage of people with a religious faith is around 20%–25% (roughly 250–300 million people). Additionally, many more, though they claim to have no faith, still adhere to family traditions passed down for the sake of familial well-being. Even so, the majority continue to live within the framework of “Egypt”:

- They are confined by an atheistic education system that constantly bombards them with the idea that “faith is foolish.”
- They have become accustomed to a materialistic way of life, believing that “material life is more important than faith.”
- When confronted with conflicts of worldviews, they are unwilling to spend time pondering; they choose instead to survive by the rules of secular society or by the law of the jungle. These people are like the Israelites of old—complaining about their situation but not truly yearning for change:

- They know that they live in “servitude” yet are unwilling to pay the price for freedom.
- They have witnessed some “miracles”—such as the moral appeal of Christianity or the life testimonies of believers—yet they remain skeptical.
- They verbally proclaim their willingness to pursue truth, but when faith demands obedience and sacrifice, they retreat and prefer the comforting illusion of “peaceful stasis,” waiting for others to act.

This is exactly the dilemma Moses faced: God's revelation had been made clear, but many still refused to accept it, even preferring to return to the comforts of Egypt.

2. The Awakened vs. The Hesitant vs. The Intransigent

Even among today's communities of faith, we can discern three groups akin to those in the Exodus period:

- **The Awakened (Modern Caleb and Joshua):**

They have experienced the hardships of society yet choose to trust in God and enter a “new order.” They are willing to forsake worldly security to embark on the journey of faith, even if it entails difficulty and sacrifice. Their faith is not based solely on miracles but on how that faith has shaped their lives.

- **The Hesitant (The Majority Who Are Undecided):**

They show interest in faith but are unwilling to pay the price for true acceptance. They demand “more evidence,” and even when they see miracles, they continue to wait on the sidelines. They may call on God in times of distress, but once circumstances improve, they return to secular patterns.

- **The Intransigent (Those Who Perish in the Wilderness):**

- Their attitude toward faith is negative. Even when confronted with miracles, they do not change. They prefer to cling to the old worldview, even if that means continuing to live in “servitude.” Their fate is not due to God's lack of mercy, but because they themselves choose not to believe.

This is not a simple matter of elimination; God gives everyone an opportunity, but in the end, it is up to each person to choose whether or not to follow. As Jesus said, “For many are called, but few are chosen.” (Matthew 22:14 NKJV).

III. Conclusion: The Test of Exodus Continues

The story of Exodus is not merely ancient history—it is also a reality that unfolds today. Faith is not something that everyone can or will accept; only those who are willing to embrace and be shaped by God’s guidance, and who boldly seek the Promised Land on the journey through the wilderness, will enter into it. Even now, our land remains a “modern Egypt,” where everyone faces a similar choice:

- Will you continue living under the secular order, enjoying temporary stability?
- Or will you set forth on the journey through the wilderness into the Promised Land of faith?

Everyone has the opportunity to choose. God does not force anyone to believe, but He will not allow unbelievers to enter His Kingdom. In the end, the selection is not made by God eliminating some but by each person deciding whether or not to follow.

Dear friends, would you choose to be like modern Caleb and Joshua, or will you be among those who perish in the wilderness?

I dedicate this document to all family members journeying in pursuit of a life of faith.

Let us join together in prayer!

“Shared Karma” and the Freedom and Joy in Christ

I came across a sentence that inspired me to write this “translation”: *Every person is a collection of contradictions. When you only see the evil in others, you are partaking in their karma, which reflects that your heart is encumbered. If you have compassion for them and silently bless them, then you do not share their karma; you are in your own idyllic place while they remain in their realm of perdition. Respecting the fate of others and understanding their limitations— everyone has their own lessons and causes and effects.* As the poem says:

Observing a person’s wicked deeds, the heart creates its own barriers; Bound by karma, one’s vision is obscured. Every living being has a glimmer of light, The dark side does not tell the whole story. With compassion in our hearts and silent blessings, We avoid sharing in each other’s karma and find inner peace. Respect fate and understand limitations, Each pursues spiritual growth without entanglement.

In traditional Chinese culture and certain spiritual practices, “shared karma” implies that an individual, under the influence of karma, becomes entangled with others, thus being dragged into the cycle of cause and effect. From the perspective of the Bible, however, humanity lives under the dominion of Satan due to each person’s inherent sinfulness, unable to save themselves; only by surrendering to God can one obtain redemption and experience true freedom and joy.

So, when we are confronted with the evil deeds of others, how should we respond so that we neither fall into “shared karma” nor come under the sway of sin—but rather, rely on God, live fully in the present, enjoy freedom and joy, and become a blessing to others?

1. Recognize Human Sinfulness—Do Not Judge by Your Own Perspective

The Bible teaches us, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23 NKJV). Here “sin” refers more to the lusts of the eyes, the desires of the flesh, and the pride of life. All the wicked deeds we see in the world are the result of human

fallenness. Whether it is selfishness, pride, anxiety, fear, deception, or violence, hatred, betrayal—they do not occur by accident; rather, humanity is universally bound by these sins.

At the same time, Jesus warns us not to judge lightly: “Judge not, that you be not judged.” (Matthew 7:1 NKJV). We tend to focus on the faults of others while overlooking our own weaknesses. When our eyes fix solely on the evil in others, our hearts are shrouded in darkness, losing the peace and joy that God gives. True wisdom is not achieved simply by learning or accumulating enough knowledge to judge others’ faults, but by first examining whether we too have these “evils” within us, humbly recognizing our limitations, and entrusting everything to God—correcting ourselves according to the Bible’s call, that is, repenting. In short, when we see the evil in others, we must first reflect on whether we share similar faults—a meal cooked in the same pot will not differ greatly in taste.

2. Do Not Walk with Evil—Surrender Sovereignty to God

Some argue that in the face of evil, we should endure, have compassion, and silently bless others so as not to share in their karma. However, the Biblical perspective goes further: true freedom and joy do not come from human endurance but from surrendering to God.

When confronted with a sinner, we are not meant to passively endure; rather, we must clearly understand: “Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.” (Romans 12:17 NKJV). This emphasizes that we should not allow ourselves to be affected by evil, but instead respond proactively—maintaining righteousness without being consumed by hatred.

Thus, we are not simply to “silently bless,” but to commit that person’s life to God. In Scripture, when Jesus faced sinners, He did not merely tolerate them or recoil in disgust; instead, He guided them with love and truth toward repentance. He neither compromised with sin nor became tainted by the sins of others, always standing in God’s righteousness and grace. When we see the evil in others, we should pray: “Lord, this person also needs Your mercy. Please take control of their life and lead them to

repentance so that they are no longer ruled by sin.” In doing so, we are released from human anger, disappointment, and discontent, not allowing the evil in others to disturb our inner peace, but rather living out the freedom and joy that God has bestowed upon us.

3. Fear God and Live the Present with True Freedom and Joy

Secular views tell us to avoid evildoers to steer clear of negative energy; but the Christian faith tells us that true freedom and joy do not come from evading the wicked but from relying on God’s guidance and living in His will. The Bible says, “Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.” (Matthew 5:48 NKJV). This is not to make us infallible, but to continually renew our lives in Christ, so our spirits are no longer influenced by the environment or people, but are ever joyful and hopeful. As Psalm 16:11 NKJV declares, “You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”

When we trust in God, we are no longer chained by the evil deeds of others or the darkness of this world, but can focus on living each day fully. We are not consumed by anger, judgment, or pain; instead, by God’s grace, we live with freedom and joy. Even when faced with hardship and injustice, we can choose to believe in the goodness of God, moving forward with peace and hope.

4. Conclusion and Exhortation

From a worldly perspective, we might worry about “shared karma”—fearing the influence of evildoers and choosing to remain indifferent or distant, so as not to be dragged into it. However, the Christian faith assures us that we do not keep ourselves holy by our own efforts, but through God’s grace.

In the face of sin, we should not resist it with our own will, nor should we fall into judgment; instead, we must surrender both ourselves and others to God. We may pray as follows:

“Lord, please forgive the sinner and guard my heart, that I may not be ruled by hatred, fear, anxiety, or judgment. I know that You are the ultimate judge, and I desire to act according to Your will—living in each moment You give me, facing everyone with love and truth, and glorifying Your name. Amen!”

When we act in this way, we avoid falling into the shared karma of hatred, bitterness, and judgment, and instead live out true freedom and joy in God's grace. May we all stand firm by God's power in Christ, overcoming the evils of others without stumbling, and enjoying life with the freedom and joy of the present moment.

Let us pray together for this.

Jesus Died for You vs. Allah Made You Die for Him

—The Fundamental Differences Between Christianity and Islam

The contrast between “Jesus Christ died for you” and “Allah made you die for Him” reveals the fundamental differences between Christianity and Islam in regard to the nature of God, the relationship between God and man, the mode of redemption, the attitude toward dissenters, religious freedom, and societal impact. These differences not only involve theological issues but also profoundly affect the historical development, cultural manifestations, and legal systems of the two faiths. This article provides a detailed analysis centered on five key issues, citing relevant scriptures from both the Bible and the Quran:

- 1. The Nature of God: Voluntary, Sacrificial Love vs. Absolute Demand for Sovereignty**
- 2. The Mode of Redemption: Grace and Faith vs. Obedience and Merits**
- 3. Attitude Toward Dissenters: Forgiveness vs. Suppression**
- 4. Religious Freedom: The Openness of the Gospel vs. Coercion and Violent Control**
- 5. History and Reality: The Development of Christian Societies vs. Islamic Societies**

- 1. The Nature of God: Voluntary, Sacrificial Love vs. Absolute Demand for Sovereignty**

Christianity: God’s Love Expressed Through Voluntary Sacrifice

“For while we were still sinners, Christ died for us, demonstrating God’s love for us.” (Romans 5:8) “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16) In Christianity, God expresses His love through self-sacrifice. Jesus Christ willingly embraced the cross—not because of human obedience but out of His proactive desire to save the world. His love is unconditional, not based on human actions but solely on God’s grace.

Islam: Allah Demands Absolute Obedience and Controls Men’s Fate

“O you who have believed, obey Allah and obey the Messenger, and those in authority among you. And if you dispute over anything, refer it to Allah and the Messenger, if you should believe in Allah and the Last Day. That is the best [way] and best in result.” (Quran 4:59) “O believers, fear Allah and obey his Messenger.” (Quran 8:1)

In Islam, Allah is the absolute sovereign. He demands unconditional obedience from His followers, and any disobedience marks one as an unbeliever who will face judgment. For Muslims, humanity’s duty is to follow Allah’s laws rather than to build a relationship with God based on love.

Comparison:

- In Christianity, God proactively loves people and is willing to sacrifice Himself for them.
- In Islam, God requires absolute obedience, with the consequence of punishment for disobedience.

2. The Mode of Redemption: Grace and Faith vs. Obedience and Merits

Christianity: Redemption Is a Gift of Grace Through Faith

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.” (Ephesians 2:8-9) “For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law.” (Romans 3:28)

Christianity emphasizes that human good works cannot earn salvation; redemption is a gift from God, attainable solely through faith in Jesus Christ. While actions are important, they are the result of faith rather than the prerequisite for redemption.

Islam: Redemption Depends on Human Merits and Obedience

“Whoever does righteous deeds, whether male or female, while being a believer—those will enter Paradise and will not be wronged, [even as much as] the speck on a date seed.” (Quran 6:160) “And on the Day the Hour will be established, the criminals will be exposed, and their deeds will be weighed;

whoever has more good than evil will be in Paradise.” (Quran 23:102-103)

In Islam, redemption is based on human actions; believers must accumulate enough righteous deeds to earn entrance into Paradise. If evil outweighs good, Allah may decree punishment in Hell. Salvation is not granted purely out of God’s grace but is contingent on human effort and obedience.

Comparison:

- Christianity teaches that salvation is God’s gift and is obtained through faith in Jesus.
- Islam teaches that redemption depends on a person’s deeds and obedience, with one’s merits determining their fate.

3. Attitude Toward Dissenters: Forgiveness vs. Suppression

Christianity: Forgive Your Enemies and Do Not Force Faith

“But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” (Matthew 5:44) “Be careful, then, how you treat each other. If you do what is right, you will have no enemies. But if you do what is wrong, you will have enemies, be they individuals or groups.” (1 Thessalonians 5:15)

Jesus taught His disciples to respond to enemies and persecutors with love rather than violence. Christians are called to approach those of different faiths with forgiveness and compassion rather than forcibly converting them.

Islam: Destroy the Infidels and Enforce Obedience

“Then, when you have overcome them, kill them wherever you find them...” (Quran 9:5) “Fight against those who do not believe in Allah or in the Last Day until they pay the jizyah with willingness while they are humbled.” (Quran 9:29)

Islamic scripture clearly instructs believers to combat non-Muslims and, in some cases, to use force to make them comply with Islamic law. In certain Islamic countries, non-believers are subjected to legal and social persecution.

Comparison:

- Christianity encourages forgiveness and non-violent responses to opponents.

- Islam, according to its scriptures, advocates fighting against infidels, sometimes even resorting to violence.

4. Religious Freedom: The Openness of the Gospel vs. Coercion and Violent Control

Christianity: Religious Freedom and Voluntary Conversion

“For the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.” (2 Corinthians 3:17) “Then Jesus said to his disciples, ‘If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.’” (Matthew 16:24)

Christianity stresses that faith must be a matter of personal choice; Jesus invites individuals to believe in Him without forcing conversion. In Christian culture, individual freedom of belief is respected, and everyone has the right to accept or reject the gospel.

Islam: Apostasy Is Punishable by Death and Faith Is Coerced

“Whoever changes his religion, kill him.” (Hadith from Sahih Bukhari 9:57) “Fight those who do not believe in Allah until they give the jizyah willingly.” (Quran 9:73)

In many Islamic countries, apostasy (leaving Islam) is punishable by death, and believers who convert to another religion may face severe legal consequences. Islamic law in these regions strictly controls religious freedom and proselytization is forbidden.

Comparison:

- Christianity supports religious freedom by allowing individuals to choose their faith voluntarily.
- Islam imposes compulsory faith, with severe penalties for apostasy and restrictions on religious freedom.

5. History and Reality: The Development of Christian Societies vs. Islamic Societies

Christianity: Championing Freedom, Democracy, and Human Rights

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:28)

Christian societies have developed modern democratic institutions and respect human rights. In regions influenced by Christian values, such as Europe and North America, modern legal systems protect religious freedom and individual rights.

Islam: Religious Totalitarianism That Suppresses Personal Freedom

“Whoever does not obey Allah’s laws is not a believer.” (Quran 5:44)

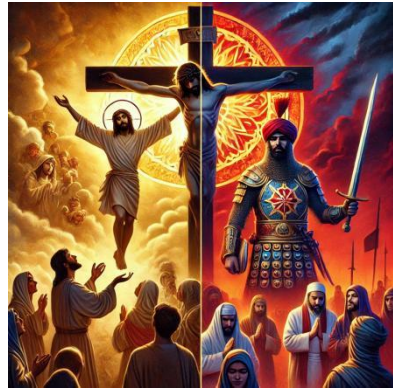
The Islamic world, in many cases, remains under the strict control of Sharia law. In many Islamic countries, personal freedoms are limited, women’s rights are curtailed, and even apostasy may be punishable by death.

Comparison:

- Christianity has fostered the development of democratic, free societies that protect human rights.
- Islam, in some regions, is associated with religious totalitarianism that limits personal freedoms.

Concluding Synthesis

Christianity’s God is the God of love and sacrifice who grants freedom. In contrast, the Islamic God demands obedience and rules over humanity with absolute authority. Their natures are fundamentally different—Allah is not the same God described in the Bible.



Finally: Christianity’s Love and Freedom vs. Islam’s Obedience and Control

Through a comparison of the nature of God, the mode of redemption, attitudes toward dissent, religious freedom, and societal development, we clearly see that the two are not part of the same faith system nor do they worship the same God. At the core of Christianity is a God who loves actively—Jesus Christ sacrificed Himself to save humanity and grant them true freedom. On the other hand, at the heart of Islam is an

all-powerful Lord who demands absolute obedience, even to the point of war.

In the Christian faith, salvation comes through belief; God's grace is not earned by human deeds but is given out of unconditional love. By contrast, in Islam, redemption is based on a person's obedience and merits; insufficient good deeds may even lead to judgment and damnation. Christianity encourages believers to forgive their enemies and love one another, while the Quran is interpreted by some to call for the eradication of infidels and suppression of dissenters. Christian societies have evolved into bastions of freedom, democracy, and human rights, whereas Islamic societies in many regions continue under strict Sharia control, with limited personal freedoms, diminished rights for women, and even the death penalty for apostates.

Ultimately, we arrive at the conclusion: the God of Christianity is a savior full of love and sacrifice who grants freedom and life, whereas the God of Islam demands obedience and imposes a rigid legal order. Their theological logics are entirely different and do not represent the same deity. Embracing Christ brings freedom and life, but obeying Allah means accepting control, constraint, and even conflict. Faced with these two faiths, we must deeply consider: do we choose to accept God's grace and live in the freedom of Christ, or are we willing to be controlled by the law and religious extremism?

Comparison	Christianity	Islam
Nature of God	God is one in Three Persons (Father, Son, Holy Spirit): Jesus is God incarnate	There is no division in God; God rejects the concept of the Trinity
Relationship with God	Man can call God his Father; God loves each person	God is a master not a father: God is omnipotent and completely distant
Means of Salvation	Jesus redeems and justifies sinners through the cross; salvation relies totally on God's grace	If one's good deeds outweigh the evil, then he will be saved: salvation relies in part on human efforts
Belief in Religious Freedom	No coercion in belief; believers are to gently lead others to know and obey God	Non-believers are not to openly criticize Islam; apostates should be repressed
View of Social and Political History	State is separate from the church; both sides can check the other's abuses of power	Government supports Islam, religion, and state are united in Islamic law

Additional Reflections: Is Islam a Cult?

1. What Is a “Cult”?

At academic and legal levels, the term “cult” typically refers to a religious group or organization that exhibits the following characteristics:

- a. **Extreme Exclusivity:** Claiming that only their belief is the truth and regarding other faiths or the non-believers as enemies.
- b. **Mind Control:** Demanding absolute obedience, not permitting questioning, and restricting the thoughts and behaviors of its followers.
- c. **Coercive Practices:** Using threats, violence, brainwashing, and other means to force people to join or to prevent them from leaving.
- d. **Disruption of Social Stability:** Inciting violence, hatred, or terror, and posing a threat to society.

2. Basic Definition and Classification of Islam

Islam is the world's second-largest religion, with roughly 1.9 billion followers. It encompasses multiple sects:

- a. **Mainstream Islam (such as Sunni and Shia):** The majority of believers follow traditional doctrines and do not hold extreme views.

b. **Islamic Extremism (such as the Taliban, ISIS, al-Qaeda):** These groups' ideologies and actions meet the criteria of a cult and are widely regarded as terrorist organizations. Therefore, it is necessary to distinguish between mainstream Islam and Islamic extremism rather than generalizing.

3. **A Few Concluding Points for Consideration:**

- When considering “mainstream Islam,” although it exhibits strong exclusivity, it cannot be simply defined as a cult.
- However, when considering “Islamic extremist factions” (such as ISIS or the Taliban), they fulfill all the criteria of a cult.
- In some Islamic countries, Islam has been politicized as a tool of governance that limits religious freedom and thereby shows cult-like characteristics.
- Compared with other religions, Islam in certain contexts—through mind control, enforced conformity, and its attitude toward dissent—bears more resemblance to the definition of a cult.

Thus, while Islam as a whole cannot be completely classified as a cult, its extremist factions and the manner in which Islam is sometimes executed in certain countries do indeed exhibit cult-like features.

How Many “Good People” Are There in This Family?

“Be a good person”—this is the moral guideline instilled in almost everyone from childhood in the new Chinese society. Parents teach their children, schools educate students, and public discourse repeatedly emphasizes how a “good person” should behave. However, what truly makes society better is not simply the “good people” themselves, but those who think logically, have the ability to act, and dare to confront injustice. In reality, many “good people” choose silence, obedience, or even indirect support when faced with extreme forces, collective violence, or unjust oppression. They may not necessarily be bad people, but their silence produces the worst outcomes.

Such “good people” are, in truth, what people refer to as cowards— “good people” become nothing more than an excuse and the emperor’s new clothes. History—both in China and around the world—shows that the tragedies were not caused by an excess of bad people, but by “good people” who were too weak, numb, obedient, and adept at pretending. As the number of “silent good people” increases in society, the wicked are allowed to act with impunity.

1. The Concept of “Good People” Is a Disguise for Cowardice

Many people consider themselves “good” and teach their children to be “good,” but the problem is that the label “good person” is empty—it lacks a concrete standard and simply means “not doing bad things.” Morality has been twisted into a matter of obedience and compliance, rather than rationality and courage. One must understand that the definition of a good person is shaped by the ruling class or dominant social groups; many people passively adapt to their environment instead of actively choosing kindness.

Boasting of oneself as a good person is essentially a way to avoid responsibility. “I haven’t done anything bad, so I must be a good person” is a claim that does not imply one will take action when faced with injustice. In addition, moral sensibility has been hijacked by collective thinking. Many believe themselves to be

“righteous,” yet in reality they are merely obeying a mainstream consensus rather than engaging in independent thought. Authoritarian systems encourage obedience rather than genuine goodness. Those who truly stand up against injustice and challenge authority are often marginalized by society or even labeled as “unharmonious” or “troublemakers.”

2. How Do “Silent Good People” Help Enable Evil?

Both history and reality show that large-scale social atrocities almost invariably depend on the silent support and passive acquiescence of “silent good people.” Although they do not commit the evil acts directly, their indifference, obedience, or blind following allow true evils to occur.

(1) That Revolutionary Period: When “Good People” Become Accomplices

If the history of the new China were truly filled with “good people,” if my parents and grandparents were truly “good people,” if your parents and grandparents were truly “good people,” would that catastrophe have occurred? From 1966 to 1976, the Red Guards and rebel factions conducted widespread struggle sessions and persecuted countless “black class” elements and intellectuals; many victims were publicly humiliated to death or had their families destroyed. Those who participated in these atrocities were not only the incited “good people” but also countless self-proclaimed “righteous” good people. They denounced their relatives, colleagues, and friends simply because “the organization required it”; they chanted slogans at struggle sessions without realizing they were committing crimes; they claimed to have “just followed orders,” yet these orders were destroying countless families. Had more people with true thinking ability and courage spoken out at that time, perhaps this lunacy would not have escalated so extremely.

(2) The Three Years of Famine: When “Good People” Pretend Not to See

Between 1959 and 1961, tens of millions perished in a famine. It was not that no one knew the country was suffering from starvation—local officials, cadres, and those in the know all

understood the grim reality—but no one dared to speak the truth for fear of being labeled “counter-revolutionary.” Consequently, the reports reaching the central authorities still boasted bountiful harvests and a happy people, while ordinary citizens starved to death in silence. Had more people had the courage to expose the truth and had more people been able to escape the false political atmosphere, history might have been different.

(3) COVID-19 Lockdowns: When “Good People” Choose to Obey

From 2020 to 2022, China’s extreme lockdown policies trapped countless people in hardship. Many patients died without medical help, and numerous elderly people were left confined at home without care. Yet, in response to the extreme epidemic prevention measures, the majority chose silence—even proactively reporting those who violated lockdown rules. When the lockdown intensified, they said, “The state is protecting us”; when the lockdown was suddenly lifted, they said, “The state is considering the people.” It was not the “obedient good people” who ultimately pushed for policy relaxation, but those who had the courage to speak out and question the measures.

If your parents and my parents, and our grandparents were uneducated, had never used Douyin or the internet and remained unaware of society, would our generation truly understand this society? Wouldn’t we still be cowards? Therefore, when it comes to improving one’s understanding, factors like knowledge, educational background, whether one lives in a modest home or a villa, even the level of prices, are all irrelevant.

(4) Islamic Extremism: When Moderate Muslims Remain Silent

The vast majority of Muslims in the world are peaceful ordinary people, but when a few extremists commit atrocities, most moderate Muslims choose silence:



– **9/11 Terrorist Attacks (2001):** Nineteen extremists hijacked airplanes and attacked the United States; yet among the billions of Muslims worldwide, how many openly condemned the attack?

Many governments of Muslim-majority countries chose to avoid the subject and shirk responsibility rather than actively eradicate extremism.

- **The Rise of ISIS (2014):** When ISIS massacred infidels, trafficked women, and burned cultural relics in Iraq and Syria, many government and religious leaders in Muslim countries remained silent. Had the global Muslim community been more proactive in opposing ISIS, such extremist groups might not have lasted as long.

- **The Charlie Hebdo Attack in France (2015):** Satirical cartoons led to extremists shooting journalists; yet many Muslims did not condemn the gunmen, instead accusing the media of “offending Islam.” The real enabler of Islamic extremism is not the violent acts of all Muslims, but rather the silence of those “pure in heart and clean in hands,” the moderate Muslims.

(5) International Cases: When Good People Become Aids to Dictators

- **Nazi Germany (1933–1945):** Hitler’s regime was not established solely by a few evil people but was built on the obedience, silence, and blind conformity of millions of ordinary Germans. During the Holocaust, most Germans knew what was happening, but chose to pretend not to see.

- **The Rwandan Genocide (1994):** The mass slaughter of Tutsis by the Hutu resulted in the deaths of one million people. However, the actual wielders of the knife were only a few; the vast majority either stood by as bystanders, obedient in fear, or were incited later to participate in the massacre.

3. The Bible: What Should a True “Good Person” Be?

The Bible never teaches believers merely to be “good people” but to “act justly and love mercy.” “Humanity, the LORD has shown you what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:8)

(1) Jesus Taught People to Confront Injustice

Jesus dared to challenge the powerful even though He knew He would be killed; for example, He drove the greedy merchants out

of the temple (Matthew 21:12–13), demonstrating that a truly good person is not one who remains silent but one who takes action.

(2) The Bible Criticizes Those Who “Claim to Be Good”

The Pharisees considered themselves “good people,” but Jesus called them “hypocrites,” emphasizing that a mere show of piety without righteous action is false. “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness.” (Matthew 23:27, Chinese Union Version)

4. What Does This Society Truly Need?

(1) People Who Think Logically, Not Hypocritical “Good People”

Society does not need a group of self-satisfied “moral models” but rather individuals who think independently, have a clear understanding of reality, and can act accordingly. They should analyze the situation rationally rather than blindly believing official propaganda or public sentiment; make sensible choices instead of following the crowd, choosing silence, or joining in the persecution of others. When facing injustice, at the very least, they should not aid the wrongdoers—and ideally, they would actively work to stop the evil.

(2) Society Needs Three Types of People

➤ Those Who Can Make Themselves Happy Without Oppressing Others:

These individuals know how to find their place in society without excessive self-sacrifice or causing harm; they focus on their own ideals and values rather than blindly conforming to the “good person” standard.

➤ Those Who Can Help Others Achieve Their Ideals:

They are not merely “kind” but are capable, wise, and able to guide more people toward a better life.

➤ Those Who Can Stop Evil Acts:

These people are truly worthy of respect—even if misunderstood by the majority or branded as “troublemakers” or “rebels.” They

may not be able to save the world, but at the very least, they ensure that they do not become accomplices.

5. The Whole Family Must Stop Being “Silent Good People”

Stop defining yourself solely by the label of a “good person.” It does not matter whether you are a good person; what matters is whether you can make the right decisions in the real world. Morality is not a label but a capability—one that requires thought and action. Our society, families, and children do not need “good people” but rather individuals who truly think and act. Moreover, be cautious: when any government avoids addressing real livelihood issues yet incessantly praises the “spirit of good people,” one must ask—are they themselves the biggest problem? Are they covering up their own inaction?

In truth, I am still a “good person” because I have vulnerabilities and fear ending up without food.

A Rational Look at the Challenges of Confucian Cultural Life and the Call for Repentance

China's cultural history is profound, with Confucian thought interwoven throughout—shaping the mindset and behavioral norms of countless generations. The Confucian emphasis on “benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and trustworthiness” indeed provides a moral framework for society and plays a positive role in maintaining social order. Yet we must examine rationally whether this “harmony” also harbors a dangerous tendency toward blind obedience and the suppression of independent thought. In today's world—especially when facing various daily hardships—should we reexamine the applicability of these traditional values, and can we draw renewal and inspiration from a biblical perspective?

Think about it: although Confucian culture has, in many ways, shaped the basic folk order of Chinese society, on some levels it has also become a shackle that restricts the inner freedom and genuine pursuit of faith among ordinary people. A review of the employment, romantic, and career prospects over the past several decades for those born in the Cultural Revolution—and their descendants—reveals that many people's uncritical adherence to and pursuit of Confucian thought has neglected the importance of critical thinking and the cultivation of independent character. As a result, at several key moments in their lives, they lost their way and ultimately became tools for the ruling classes, unable to live out inner freedom and joy.

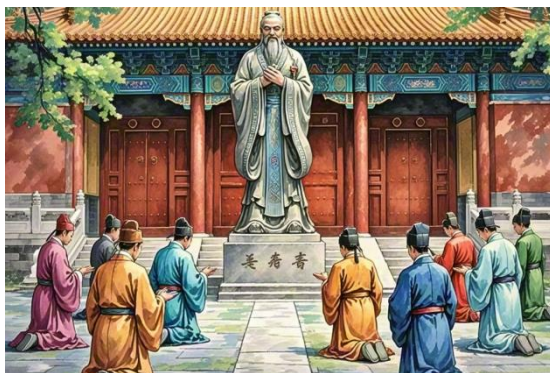
The Limitations of Confucian Thought and Modern Predicaments

Confucian thought once reigned as the mainstream ideology of Chinese society. It emphasizes an ethics of “benevolence” and upholds “propriety” as the norm while extolling the virtue of “wisdom.” However, these seemingly noble moral guidelines are often misused or interpreted one-sidedly to become instruments for rulers to oppress individual freedom and independent thought. Although some traditional ideas within Confucian

culture have played a positive role in establishing social order, they provide insufficient support for matters of personal belief, free choice, and the quest for the meaning of life.

In recent years, many have come to view the ethical standards of Confucian thought as the sole guide for life while neglecting the exploration of inner freedom and the spiritual realm—resulting in people and even their children becoming listless. For example, the heavy emphasis on the authority of “family,” “parents,” and “elders” under Confucian thought often causes individuals, when confronted with life’s hardships, to rely on external authority rather than listen to their own inner voice. In such a social atmosphere, faith, freedom, and critical thinking are suppressed. Consequently, when facing difficulties, individuals lose the inner strength to act from within and thus are unable to find genuine inner peace and joy.

Furthermore, the invisible force of capital increasingly controls every aspect of our lives. The economic rules of the market, the wave of consumerism, and the objectification of individuals gradually cause us to lose sight of who we truly are—reducing us to tools in the pursuit of profit and status. Under the pressure of economic strain and intense social competition, many lose their true selves and eventually fall into anxiety, exhaustion, and pain.



The Call of the Christian Faith: Repentance and the True Liberation of Inner Freedom

In contrast to the limitations of Confucian thought, the Christian faith offers humanity another option. The teachings of Christ are not external restrictions but the pathway to inner freedom. The Bible instructs us, “And you will know the truth, and the truth

will set you free” (John 8:32). This implies that when people detach their object of reverence from the narrow confines of Confucian culture—when they face squarely the constraints imposed by their social class and break the chains that hold them back—they discover that only the Creator who can truly lead them is worthy of reverence. You will come to learn that it is Jesus Christ who has borne for you all your chains and limitations of thought, granting you freedom in Christ and the ability to pursue joy in this world. In short, only through a relationship with God can one break every external constraint and internal shackle, leading to true freedom and joy.

The Bible reminds us not to be swayed by the standards of this “world.” Jesus declared, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” He taught that the true meaning of life does not lie in the pursuit of material wealth but in cultivating a relationship with God and nurturing inner peace. The Kingdom of God stands in stark opposition to worldly power, wealth, and status—it calls us to reexamine our inner selves and return to what truly matters in life.

In Christ, we are called to repent. Repentance is not merely a change in external behavior; it is a profound process of self-recognition and internal renewal. Many, influenced by cultural forces, have indulged in utilitarianism, materialism, and rigid behavioral norms while neglecting the true needs of the soul—failing not only themselves but also their families and future generations. Yet Jesus Christ teaches the power of repentance and faith so that we can break free from these false frameworks, rediscover our true selves, and gain authentic life. Is such a legacy of life not far more enduring than a mere legacy of “wealth”?

Repentance in faith does not negate the past but instead ushers in an entirely new beginning for the future. It enables us to cast off the entrenched “rites” and “rules” inherent in Confucian culture, to reassess our personal lifestyles and inner longings. Under Christ’s guidance, we are no longer swayed by external judgments or societal pressures, but, bolstered by inner peace and godly wisdom, we step into a more authentic and free life.

The Inheritance Without Faith: From Familial Shackles to the Liberation of the Soul

In many families, the lack of a legacy of faith becomes an invisible shackle. For historical reasons, many Chinese families have not provided their children with the guidance of faith. Many grow up in environments devoid of God, and the resulting inner emptiness and confusion gradually consume their lives—replaced by various “traditions” and “ancestral teachings” passed down through generations. In particular, the immature teachings inherited from both sides of the family serve as an invisible shackle that hinders children’s growth. This familial absence of faith passes silently from generation to generation, creating a vicious cycle that leaves lasting imprints on one’s thinking patterns and spiritual life.

Such an absence of a faith legacy means that when people face life’s challenges and hardships, they cling to powerless methods and cannot truly free themselves from inner disturbances and pain. Yet under the guidance of Christ, we see another choice—that through repentance, faith, and a relationship with God, one can completely break this cycle, shatter the chains, and attain genuine inner freedom and joy.

When the light of Christ shines upon a family, that family is no longer confined by external “rules.” Instead, through the power of faith, every family member is helped to find their own life’s direction. In Christ, a family is transformed from being merely a space for the continuation of cultural tradition into a haven where the soul finds rest and renewal. Whether parent or child, the love of Christ can touch every heart, changing the way they understand life, faith, and meaning.

Brothers and sisters, let us begin with reading the Bible. Although its narrative recounts the faith journey of ancient Israel, through worship and prayer we can grasp its timeless life principles and have our own lives illuminated.

Returning to Christ: A Rational Perspective on Confucian Culture and Modern Challenges

When we take a rational look at the relationship between Confucian culture and the Christian faith, we can recognize the respective values and limitations of each. Confucian culture emphasizes family and social responsibility, extolling moral behavior; yet it may not lead individuals to inner freedom and peace. In contrast, the Christian faith, through a personal relationship with God, empowers individuals with true freedom and joy and offers the power to transcend the constraints of cultural tradition.

Therefore, when facing the predicaments of modern society, we should neither follow the crowd blindly nor allow external authority and pressure to control us. Through Christ's teachings, we can view life's challenges with a fresh perspective, repent of our attitudes and dispositions, cast off the pursuit of material and utilitarian gain, and live out true freedom and joy. In the light of Christ, we can reassess the impact of Confucian culture, learn to interpret these cultural concepts with reason and wisdom, and ultimately discover the true meaning of life.

Conclusion: Stepping into a Life of Freedom Under Christ's Leadership

Dear friends, today let us, under the guidance of Christ, step out of the fog of life and reexamine the cultural backgrounds and societal values in which we live. Through the repentance of faith, we can not only cast off the chains of Confucian culture but also live a life that is free, joyful, and meaningful. Let us use the wisdom and love of Christ to critically assess the difficulties we face each day, repent of our misguided attitudes and dispositions, and live a life that is not enslaved by any earthly power—embracing a pure spirit and a healthy body.

God's truth has opened the door to freedom for us. May every one of us, in the light of His glory, find our true life and live out genuine freedom and joy.

Let us pray together for this.

Pious Repentance and Physiological Changes in the Human Body

Human emotions are not merely psychological experiences; they are deeply embedded in our nervous, endocrine, digestive, and cardiovascular systems—and they even affect our immune function and overall quality of life. When emotions remain in an unhealthy state for long periods, our bodies gradually adapt to these conditions, creating what may be called a “fixed pattern” of physiology or a “pathologically operating mode.” This can lead to chronic diseases, psychological disorders, and even spiritual exhaustion and a severe decline in quality of life. When mentioning spiritual exhaustion, this is not a joke. Whether or not one adheres to a religious faith, both a narrow and broad view of spirituality are fundamental guarantees of the high quality of one’s life.

Today, I will not discuss other religious forms but focus on one aspect: as Christians, although we may profess our belief in the Lord in our hearts and words, we often remain ensnared by anxiety, anger, fear, and worry. We fail to truly enter the “childlike state” that Jesus promised (Matthew 18:3). We do not consistently turn from our negative emotional states to look to God. Genuine faith is not merely believing in God’s existence; rather, it is allowing God to renew our hearts at all times and restore our life systems to the original order in which He created them.

In truth, what I want to say is that many Christians—myself certainly included—although professing faith in the Lord, do not truly repent, or repent in a half-hearted, reluctant, or equivocal manner. As a result, the body’s life system (including hormone secretion, the endocrine and nervous systems, the digestive system, etc.) develops its own “memory.” Long-term abnormal conditions become ingrained in the body, leading to various diseases. Even those who profess faith do not abandon their negative behaviors through repentance and worship to become “childlike” as Jesus described. In the following, I explore these

matters from the aspects of the effects on various body systems and the teachings of Scripture.

I. The Physiological “Memory” of Emotions and Behaviors

The human body is not merely a passive vessel; it is an adaptive, plastic life system. If one remains in states of anxiety, anger, depression, fear, and similar negative emotions for prolonged periods, the body’s various systems gradually form a “fixed pattern”—a kind of “life system freeze”:

1. Restructuring of the Nervous System

Habitual negative emotions reinforce the neural pathways between the amygdala (the center of emotion) and the hypothalamus (which controls endocrine functions), making a person more prone to anxiety, irritability, or depression. Long-term stress keeps the sympathetic nervous system in a state of hyperactivation, sending the body into “fight-or-flight” mode and leading to problems such as anxiety, insomnia, and high blood pressure.

2. Hormonal and Endocrine Imbalance

Persistent lack of repentance—resulting in continuous feelings of guilt, anger, or anxiety—prompts an overproduction of cortisol (the stress hormone), which suppresses the immune system and increases the risks of heart disease, diabetes, obesity, and more. With decreased secretion of dopamine and endorphins, a person is unable to experience true joy; even if they believe in the Lord, their inner life remains empty or in pain.

3. Effects on the Digestive System

The gastrointestinal tract, often called the “second brain,” is directly linked to one’s emotions. Prolonged negative emotions can lead to either overproduction or underproduction of stomach acid, triggering conditions such as gastritis, irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), constipation, or diarrhea.

4. Weakening of the Immune System

Chronic stress diminishes immune function, making the body more susceptible to illnesses and increasing risks of chronic inflammation and even cancer.

If one does not repent—or repents insincerely and without piety, failing to lean on the Lord’s Word in prayer—the body will not revert to the childlike state that Jesus promised. Thus, even a professing believer, if their heart is not truly changed, will have their body operating under the old “life inertia,” preventing the joy and peace of faith from truly entering their life.

II. How Major Emotional States Shape the Body’s Life System

1. Joy (Joy versus Overexcitement)

Moderate joy can stimulate the secretion of dopamine, oxytocin, and serotonin, stabilizing the cardiovascular system and boosting immunity. However, indulgence in worldly pleasures that result in overexcitement can over-stimulate the sympathetic nervous system, potentially triggering arrhythmias, sudden death, and other issues.

Biblical Teaching: “Rejoice in the Lord always” (Philippians 4:4) – True joy comes from trusting God, not from fleeting material pleasures. Yet if one indulges in excessive luxury, revelry, or hedonistic behavior, the heart may be led away from God and become “lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God” (2 Timothy 3:4).

2. Anger (Anger versus the Bondage of Sin)

Chronic anger has at least three major effects: – Overactivation of the amygdala in the nervous system creates an easily irritable disposition. – Excessive secretion of cortisol by the endocrine system suppresses the immune system, increasing risks of diabetes and heart disease. – Imbalances in stomach acid production in the digestive system can lead to gastric ulcers and irritable bowel syndrome.

Biblical Teaching: “Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry” (Ephesians 4:26) – Unforgiveness and resentment act as toxins within the life system, gradually destroying both body and soul. “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matthew 5:44) – Forgiveness is not only a spiritual mandate but also key to physical health.

3. Worry (Chronic Anxiety versus Trust)

Chronic anxiety results in sustained high levels of cortisol, suppressing immune function and leading to hypertension, cancer, or diabetes; it may cause atrophy in the frontal lobe—leading to poor decision-making and memory loss—and disturb gastrointestinal functions, provoking gastritis or IBS.

Biblical Teaching: “Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself” (Matthew 6:34) and “Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you” (1 Peter 5:7). Many Christians who profess faith yet remain tormented by anxiety reveal that their hearts have not truly repented but continue to rely on themselves.

4. **Overthinking (Excessive Ruminating versus Simple Trust)**

Chronic excessive thinking impairs the hippocampus, leading to memory decline; it can slow gastrointestinal motility, causing indigestion or ulcers; and imbalances in dopamine and serotonin may provoke anxiety and depression.

Biblical Teaching: “Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things” (Philippians 4:8). Yet we often spend time worrying about the future and planning for worldly matters instead of focusing on God’s Kingdom.

5. **Sorrow (Grief versus God’s Comfort)**

Long-term sorrow can negatively affect lung function (leading to shortness of breath, asthma, and decreased immunity) and suppress brain serotonin production, fostering depression and suicidal tendencies.

Biblical Teaching: “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted” (Matthew 5:4). However, if a person refuses to accept God’s comfort and remains mired in grief and regret, their body will gradually edge toward illness and death.

6. **Fear (Fear versus God’s Love)**

Chronic fear triggers sustained adrenal gland activity, resulting in anxiety, insomnia, and kidney fatigue; it can also damage the reproductive system, leading to sexual dysfunction.

Biblical Teaching: “There is no fear in love” (1 John 4:18) and “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and self-discipline” (2 Timothy 1:7).

7. **Shock (Startlement versus Peace)**

Long-term startlement keeps the sympathetic nervous system in a state of tension, increasing the risk of arrhythmia and sudden death; disrupted cortisol levels can lead to anxiety disorders.

Biblical Teaching: “Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid” (John 14:27) and “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him” (Romans 8:28).

III. Reasons for a Lack of Repentance: The Conflict Between the Spirit and the Flesh

Based on the relationships between emotions and physiological responses described above, many Christians’ faith remains only at the level of knowledge rather than a true behavioral or mindset change. Jesus said, “Unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3). Yet, many individuals, though they pray and repent, seem to experience little emotional change; their bodies remain in the abnormal states described, held captive by factors such as:

1. **Pride** – An unwillingness to face one’s own issues

Some consider themselves superior to others, refusing to admit that they need change; they may claim, “I’m much better than I used to be,” yet still harbor certain sins. Believing these sins have not yet manifested or been exposed, they hide them in their hearts and, in effect, do not truly repent.

2. **Fear** – Being afraid to truly let go

People become accustomed to their old ways—even when they know those ways are harmful—and are reluctant to change for fear of losing control. For example, someone prone to anger might insist, “This is just my nature; I can’t change,” thus allowing anger to continue dominating their life.

3. **Self-Deception** – Replacing repentance with mere acts of worship

Many participate in worship, prayer, and service yet refuse to confront their real issues and repent. They hope to cover up the sins of their heart through religious activities instead of allowing the Holy Spirit to truly renew them.

These three factors result in a situation where, even though one may profess faith, the body still bears the consequences of one's old lifestyle. Long-term stress and emotional patterns become fixed, leading to various diseases. In many respects, the ailments exhibited by the body are almost entirely due to prolonged "mental diseases." As God's children, we have received the secret to physical, emotional, and spiritual joy, but our narrow thinking—shaped by pride, fear, and self-deception—has allowed Satan to steer us away from the life God intends for us.

IV. How Do Repentance and Worship Help Reshape the Life System?

1. **Genuine Repentance—Breaking the Inertia of the Old Life**
Repentance is not merely verbal confession; it is a true relinquishing of one's own control so that God may transform one's life. Here are ways in which repentance influences the life system:

- **Neural Restructuring:** When a person truly repents and submits, neuroplasticity helps the brain establish new pathways for thought, making it easier to experience peace and trust. For example, someone suffering from long-term anxiety who replaces worry with prayer may, over time, see strengthening in the hippocampus (the memory center) and the prefrontal cortex (which governs decision-making), gradually altering anxious patterns.

**** Hormonal Balance Restoration:** Repentance brings inner release and reduces the secretion of cortisol, allowing the body to enter a relaxed state. A joyful mindset increases the production of oxytocin and serotonin, which can improve sleep, lower blood pressure, and enhance immunity.

**** Digestive System Recovery:** When inner peace truly prevails, the neural functions of the gastrointestinal tract normalize, alleviating conditions such as gastritis, constipation, and diarrhea.

**** Immune System Enhancement:** Genuine repentance lightens the heart so that the immune system is no longer suppressed by chronic stress and is better able to recover from illness.

2. **Worship—Aligning the Body with “God’s Rhythm”**

Worship is not merely about singing; it is about entering “God’s rhythm.” When a person engages in genuine worship, the body undergoes several changes:

**** Synchronized Heartbeats:** Studies indicate that during worship and prayer, one’s heart rate becomes more stable—approaching the calm state of infancy. This suggests that the body has entered a “safety mode,” which activates its self-healing system.

**** Alpha Brain Wave Activity:** Deep worship helps the brain enter the alpha state (8–12 Hz), similar to deep meditation. This state can help restore brain function, reduce anxiety, and enhance creativity.

**** Release of Dopamine and Endorphins:** Worship stimulates the release of “feel-good” hormones, helping one break free from prolonged negative emotions so that joy becomes habitual.

**** Restoration of a Childlike Spirit:** Worship enables a person to return to God’s embrace—like a child nestled in a parent’s arms—no longer controlled by stress and fear.

Thus, true worship is not intended merely to evoke a “religious atmosphere” but to allow the life system to reorient itself according to God’s order.

V. How to Return to the “Childlike State”?

- **Face Yourself Honestly:** Pray earnestly without hiding your problems. Ask God to reveal the hidden sins in your heart. For example, question yourself: “Am I still facing life with anger, complaints, and worry?”

- **Practice Daily Surrender:** Develop a habit of letting go and entrusting everything to God. Each morning, you might pray: “Lord, today I choose to rely completely on you. Please guide my thoughts and actions.”

- **Use Worship to Reshape Life:** Engage in daily worship so that your body can synchronize with God’s rhythm and make joy a new habit.

- **Let Repentance Bring True Healing:** When you are willing to lay down your old self and accept God's grace, your life system will naturally recover and diseases will improve.

In the end, when we truly repent and worship God, our life systems gradually return to a healthy state. We come to be as pure, joyful, and trusting as little children—the very abundance of life that Jesus promised (John 10:10).

Appendix: Book Recommendation – *A More Excellent Way*

A More Excellent Way is a book written by Dr. Henry W. Wright that explores the spiritual roots of diseases and the path to healing. (It is also known under the translated title, *The Most Wonderful Way*.) Combining biblical principles with scientific observation, the book proposes that many physical diseases are not solely caused by physiological factors but are also closely related to one's spiritual, emotional, and psychological condition. Dr. Wright argues that certain illnesses are linked to unresolved inner conflicts, negative emotions, guilt, fear, or unforgiveness, and that genuine healing requires not only medicine but also spiritual renewal and transformation.

In this book, Dr. Wright provides a systematic analysis to help readers understand:

- Why do human beings become ill?
- Which spiritual and psychological factors may serve as the root causes of disease?
- How can one obtain true health through repentance, the release of negative emotions, and trust in God?
- How do prayer, forgiveness, love, and obedience to God become keys to healing?

This book has already helped many brothers and sisters find the path to restoration of body, mind, and spirit, and it serves as an important reference for Christians and health researchers worldwide.

For example, regarding high blood pressure, the book explains that its spiritual root is typically associated with prolonged stress, anxiety, anger, and unaddressed fear. These negative emotions

keep the sympathetic nervous system in a constant state of tension, causing blood vessels to constrict and blood pressure to rise. Specifically:

- **Fear and Anxiety:** Persistent worry about the future or fear of failure results in prolonged overproduction of adrenaline, which affects vascular health.

- **Anger and Unforgiveness:** If a person harbors long-term resentment or unresolved anger toward oneself or others, this inner tension manifests physically as elevated blood pressure.

- **Excessive Need for Control:** An intense desire to control one's environment, life, and others creates continuous psychological pressure, keeping the body in a state of high stress.

The Healing and Transformation Process Patients are encouraged to examine their health on a spiritual level. For instance, a patient who has long been unable to let go of fear about the future and has always sought to control everything experiences constant anxiety. The recommended changes include:

- **Repentance and Prayer:** Acknowledge before God that you have been overly dependent on your own strength instead of truly trusting Him. Begin daily Bible reading—especially Matthew 6:34, which states, “Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself.”

- **Releasing Anger and Learning Forgiveness:** Actively communicate with family members, apologize to your spouse and children, and work to improve family relationships. Forgive those who have hurt you in the past.

- **Changing One's Lifestyle:** Adjust your work pace, avoid staying up late, exercise appropriately, and spend time each day in quiet prayer to relax.

- **Relying on God Instead of Trying to Control Everything:** Learn to cast your pressures onto God, recognizing that you cannot control everything but must seek inner peace through faith.

Through such practices, the patient's blood pressure markedly decreased, the doctor was able to reduce their medication dose, their temperament became gentler, anxiety diminished, and

sleep quality improved. Most importantly, the patient found true peace in faith—learning to rely on God rather than excessively on their own strength.

A More Excellent Way emphasizes that many physical illnesses are not solely physiological issues but reflections of one's inner and spiritual life. By adjusting one's mindset, embracing forgiveness, prayer, and trust in God, many have identified the roots of their diseases and experienced genuine healing. For those suffering from high blood pressure, anxiety, immune system disorders, and other conditions, this book offers a fresh perspective and helps guide them toward complete restoration in body, mind, and spirit.

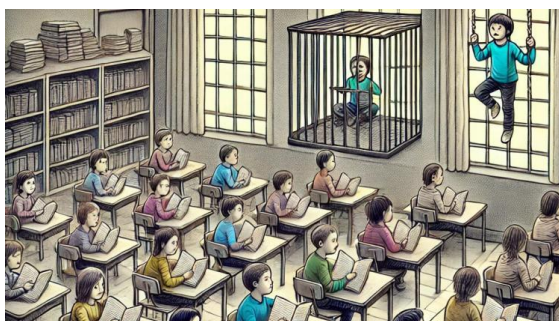
Let us pray together for this!

When Will Your Life Be In Your Own Hands?

In recent years, under the dual forces of centralized propaganda and a matching entertainment culture, Chinese society has developed a phenomenon of spiritual numbness and collective illusion. On one hand, people obediently submit to high-pressure control so that they dare not even speak a complete sentence; on the other hand, in movie theaters they roar slogans like “My life is mine, not dictated by heaven,” releasing an overdose of hormones as if this consumerist passion could mask their powerlessness in reality. During the pandemic, people literally exchanged their bodies for “subordinate obedience to superiors”; today, they are paying out of their own pockets to finance their own ignorance. This self-deception—a way of living that lacks a true sense of self—is not unlike the phenomenon seen 50 years ago during the “Little Red Guards” movement.

I. The Dual Trap of Brainwashing: Control Through Politics and Entertainment

1. Political Brainwashing: Shaping Servility, Erasing Independent Thought



Decades of centralized education have emphasized collective obedience and suppressed individual reflection. As a result, most people have grown accustomed to having their lives arranged for them rather than actively considering how to address the myriad challenges they face—even when they do reflect, it is under the framework of “the few obeying the many, subordinates obeying superiors.” In fact, even many survivors of extreme historical events like those involving the Little Red Guards still nostalgically recall that era because long-term propaganda made them ignore the pain and remember only the illusory security of collectivism.

2. Entertainment Brainwashing: Creating Illusory Satisfaction, Numbing Reality's Hardships

The feverish box office success of movies like *Nezha 2*, along with recent cries of “this wolf must be slain, that one must be eliminated,” clearly indicate the public’s craving for a “spiritual victory” approach. In the era when the Little Red Guards were in vogue, even figures like Kong Yiji were ridiculed—but what about now? When reality proves difficult to change, people choose to fuel their inner heroic dreams with state-approved cinematic adrenaline rather than struggle for true freedom in reality. The entertainment industry has become an emotional sedative, tricking people into believing they have experienced a spiritual triumph, while their fate remains unchanged.

3. Distorted Historical Memory: Selective Remembrance and Evasion of Reality

Many nostalgically look back on the Mao era, claiming that social fairness prevailed, material life was simple, and doors were left unbarred at night. In truth, such recollections arise from an illusion of “poverty-induced equality.” The injustices of today give rise to a nostalgic mindset that, however, conveniently overlooks the extreme struggles, economic stagnation, and suppression of individual freedom of that time; it also omits the immense costs in pain, the price paid in family fortunes, and the sacrifices of future generations. Even when, many years later, the families of victims receive the “Certificate of Vindication of the People’s Republic of China,” it is already too late. Has anyone truly reflected? Has anyone seriously considered how to avoid such tragedies in the future? True personal growth comes not from extracting happiness from the selectively remembered past but from facing reality squarely and finding ways to change it.

II. Why Do Chinese People Always Remain “Child-Sized” in Maturity?

Just as a nation, if people do not reflect on and correct the harms that have occurred, the suffering will continue to be inflicted on themselves and on future generations. Over the past 70 years the economy has undergone several major upgrades, and living standards have risen undeniably. Yet one must also point out

that people's ability to conduct themselves and solve problems remains at an elementary level—akin to that of primary school students—with little improvement. Consider the reasons:

1. The Education Model: Stifling Independent Thought

From an early age, schooling emphasizes obedience rather than questioning. Children recite standard answers in class and later follow preset social rules, never having learned how to analyze their own circumstances. True freedom first comes from the awakening of one's mind—not merely from the outpouring of emotion.

2. The Social Environment: High-Pressure Control, Accustomed to Being Arranged

China's social structure reinforces a "sense of security in obedience." As long as one is compliant, basic stability is ensured. However, long-term obedience robs people of the ability to make decisions for themselves—even instilling a fear of freedom. It is as if many would rather be a caged bird than face the storm in open flight. Even age-old principles such as "if you see injustice, draw your sword to help"—once practiced even by lowly ruffians—have been distorted by a series of misguided judgments that have fundamentally altered the behavioral norms of an entire nation.

3. Lack of Personal Responsibility: Finding Excuses Instead of Solutions

Faced with real problems, many attribute the difficulties to "the broader environment," "capital exploitation," or "national policies," yet they refuse to reflect on whether they themselves have made any changes. True growth means stopping the blame and beginning to take action.

III. True Freedom: Living Life in Christ

Friends, after enduring one hardship after another, shouldn't we consider how to break free from our mental frameworks and courageously pursue a life of freedom?

1. Human Wisdom Is Limited; Only Christ Is Truth

Secular "independent thought" without the support of faith easily leads to a new kind of disorientation. People chase freedom yet remain controlled by money, power, desire, and social approval.

True freedom does not come from fighting your way through these constraints on your own—it comes from being set free by the truth of Christ.

2. Not Through Self-Control, but by Letting Christ Govern Your Life

The slogan “My life is mine, not dictated by heaven” sounds exhilarating—but the reality is that no one can fully control their own destiny. True wisdom is found in surrendering your life to God so that Christ may lead your way. Friends, why not try stepping into a church, joining a community, picking up a Bible, kneeling in prayer, and truly repenting?

3. Face Reality Bravely and Do Not Become a Slave to Spiritual Opium

Do not wallow in illusions of the past, and refuse to let centralized propaganda shape your historical perspective and values. Seek out the truth on your own and do not become enslaved by entertainment. While movies may stir our blood, in reality the true warrior is not merely a moviegoer—but a person brave enough to change their own life. Furthermore, do not wait for the environment to improve. The world will not hand you freedom on a silver platter. Only you can pursue it and choose to live out a life of genuine freedom in Christ.

IV. Conclusion: Only Those Truly Free Can Rightfully Say “My Life Is Mine, Not Dictated by Heaven”

If you are merely being led by society, controlled by your emotions, or manipulated by propaganda, then you have no right to claim “my life is mine, not dictated by heaven.” Only when you have found freedom in Christ, learned to think independently, bravely face reality, and live for truth will you no longer blithely proclaim that slogan—because you will know that you are a new creation under Christ’s guidance. May every brother and sister awakened by the grace of Christ, not be a slave to illusion, but become a true child of freedom.

Let us all pray together for this!

Slogans Without Thought Cannot Replace True Freedom in Faith

In recent years, more and more people have been shouting slogans such as “My life is mine, not dictated by heaven” and “No matter how far, they must be slain,” as if their destiny were entirely in their own hands. However, in the context of contemporary China, such statements are little more than illusions. In this country, whether you are even born—and if you are, the trajectory of your entire life—is predetermined by a framework of rules set by the government. An individual’s life from birth to death—including education, employment, marriage, childbearing, retirement, and even the manner of final cremation—is all subject to the control of the state. One’s fate is not decided by personal will but is directed, constrained, and manipulated according to government policy. True freedom is neither granted by the system nor can it be wrested out by personal effort—it is found only in Christ, where true freedom of life begins.

I. A Life Predetermined from Birth

The family-planning policy was once regarded as a “basic national policy.” Its role in controlling population growth and its contribution to widespread education and social stability cannot be ignored. However, family planning also means that personal reproductive rights do not belong to the individual but are decided by the state. During the decades when the one-child policy was enforced, countless siblings vanished on the operating table of the birth-control office, and many families were financially ruined for having “extra” children. Although current policies have been adjusted—from one child to two, and now to three—the essence remains the same: the state determines how many children citizens may have. For ordinary people, reproduction is never a “free choice” but rather the outcome of what policy permits. Even the most intimate moments—when parents decide to make love—are burdened by thoughts of whether one must use protection or what would happen if an

unplanned pregnancy occurs. The quality of “togetherness” declines all the more, not to mention that extramarital, commercial sexual behavior is prohibited because it might divert people from the “life plan” the state has mapped out for its citizens.

Consider that during the era of strict birth control, being an only child was not a personal choice but a state mandate; if you had siblings, it was only because the birth policies in your province differed. Even now—when the state encourages having up to three children—the decision about how many children are “appropriate” is still made by the government rather than by free will. In other words, while animals such as pandas, monkeys, or even pigs and dogs can reproduce freely, humans—deemed noble—are forced to follow instructions in matters of intimacy and childbearing. Reproductive rights lie in the hands of the state; your very birth is decided by policy rather than by your parents’ free choice.

The education system is equally controlling of every person’s mind. China’s education is not designed to cultivate free-thinking individuals; rather, its purpose is to shape obedient subjects. From elementary school onward, textbooks instill an ideology that dictates how you are to understand the world and even whether you are deemed qualified to ponder larger questions. You must grow up following a national curriculum, taking fixed tests and conforming to a unified mindset. True independent thought is never the goal of education—the goal is obedience.

China's education system is not designed to produce free thinkers, but to mold obedient ones; From elementary school onwards, the ideologies instilled in textbooks determine how you understand the world and whether you are qualified to think about bigger issues; True independent thinking is not the goal of education, obedience is. In other words, your mind has not yet been formed, and it has already been decided by policy.

Employment, too, is fraught with constraints and limited choices. Jobs within the system are seen as “the safest option,” yet entry into state-run institutions is far from fair—it hinges on political background, personal networks, or even family ties. On the other hand, while jobs outside the state may appear to offer freedom, economic policies and market controls make independent survival extremely difficult. Skyrocketing housing prices, imperfect social security, and the intense pressure on enterprises all force individuals into accepting the career paths set by the state.

Jobs within the system (civil servants, state-owned enterprises, etc.) require political background, networking, and even party membership to enter; Work outside the system seems to be free, but the control of the economic environment makes it difficult for you to be completely independent; Job opportunities and economic policies determine the trajectory of your career. In many cases, whether you can "succeed" depends not on your ability, but on whether you meet the needs of the system.

From the moment you are born, nearly every major aspect of your life—education, employment, marriage, retirement, and even the way you are cremated—is predetermined. Housing policies dictate property prices, compelling you to take out loans before you hit 30 lest you fall behind socially; family-planning policies decide if, when, or how many children you may have; pension policies govern how you spend your twilight years; even the method of cremation is arranged by the system. From birth to death, your life is not your own to direct—it is planned out by a social system.

II. “My Life Is Mine, Not Dictated by Heaven” Is the Greatest Illusion

When people in theaters boldly shout “My life is mine, not dictated by heaven,” they may not realize that, in reality, their lives are already under complete and comprehensive control by an array of state policies.

First, the system offers “safe choices” that provide a sense of security within control. Positions in the civil service, state enterprises, and large public institutions are considered the ideal destination because these jobs come with medical care, housing, social security, and other benefits. Yet this also means that individuals must submit to the organization, follow political trends, and be absorbed into the state’s management system. When many shout “My life is mine, not dictated by heaven,” they believe they are rebelling against fate, but in truth, they are merely venting within the boundaries allowed by the system. You might try to speak out—and see if you can say one more word!

Movies, novels, and popular culture encourage the pursuit of “independence,” but the reality remains: the university you attend is determined by the state; the job you secure is dictated by policy; the number of children you can have is decided by the government; even whether you survive may depend on how medical resources are allocated—and even your organs can become “spare parts” reserved for the elite. The true question is not whether your fate is determined by “heaven” or “destiny” but whether it is truly in your own hands.

Secondly, the government knows all too well how to use “soft spots” to bind individuals. A person without family or economic pressure might be willing to risk everything for freedom or even rebel against the system. In the past, the state maintained stability through “class struggle”; now it uses burdens like mortgages, childrearing, and elderly care to ensure your compliance. For someone with a family, children, and a mortgage, compromise is inevitable—concerns over children’s education, elderly care for parents, and mortgage pressures make it nearly impossible to break free. In today’s environment, “following the system is the only viable way,” and very few dare to step outside that framework.

A deeper level of control comes from the shaping of collective thought. From a young age, people are taught that “the state is always right” and that any dissenting voices are labeled “unpatriotic” or “malicious.” When everyone is confined to the same mindset, even if a few awaken to a different possibility, it is

extremely difficult to find an alternative. Ultimately, most people choose to adapt and struggle to survive under the existing rules rather than challenge the system.

Thus, in such an environment, shouting “My life is mine, not dictated by heaven” is nothing more than an illusion. When the state can determine your birth, your education, your career, your retirement, and even the way you are cremated, can you really claim that your life is your own? The disparity between the power held by those who rule this land and the helplessness of its citizens is all too clear.

(As an aside, consider the Indian Brahmanical system—from Brahmins and Kshatriyas to Vaishyas and Shudras—and beyond these, the untouchables (Dalits). Aside from beliefs in reincarnation, restrictions on inter - caste marriage, and rigid work divisions, both Shudras and Dalits enjoyed freedom to reproduce.)

III. How Does the Christian Faith Bring True Freedom?

Facing this life’s reality, how can we truly obtain freedom? The answer is neither to blindly rebel nor to escape—it is to find true freedom in Christ. Just as one should not casually shout slogans like “My life is mine, not dictated by heaven,” individuals are encouraged not to declare that they believe in nothing or only in themselves. Instead, try learning more about biblical truth; it might make your life more harmonious and your actions more logical. Here are some key biblical perspectives for your consideration:

1. Christian teaching reminds us that our lives do not belong to the government but to our Creator.

While the government may decide your identification number, your household registration, and may even strip you of economic freedom, it cannot control your soul. The Bible declares, “And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:32). This means that true freedom arises from knowing the truth—and not from being bound by secular systems—which is the starting point of enlightened understanding.

2. The Christian faith equips us with the ability to think independently so that we are no longer controlled by lies or fear.

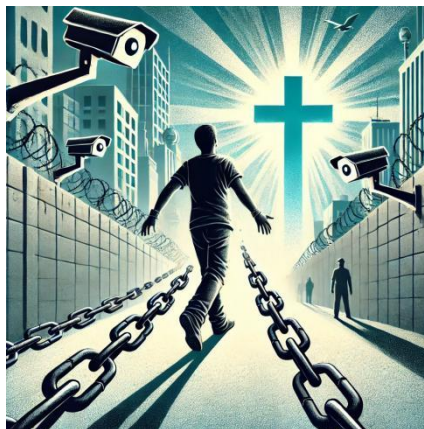
Government propaganda, education, and media are designed to make you obedient, not free. But in Christ we are taught to “test and approve what God’s will is” (Romans 12:2). Faith helps us see through the deceptions of the world so that we are no longer easily manipulated by emotions, propaganda, or external pressures.

3. The Christian faith frees us from the fear of loss by revealing our eternal security.

The state is able to control us because we fear losing our jobs, homes, or families—our material attachments. But Jesus says, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). When you know your identity is rooted in God, you will not be forced to compromise by worldly pressures but will have the courage to pursue the life that God has prepared for you.

IV. True Freedom Lies Not Within the System, but in Christ

If you are simply led by society, controlled by your emotions, or manipulated by propaganda, then you have no right to claim “My life is mine, not dictated by heaven.” True freedom is not found in the stable job within the system, not in a high salary, not in real estate, or even in having children in the best school district—it is the freedom of the soul. When you know who you are, where you come from, and where you are ultimately going, you truly take control of your own life.



Under this system there may be only a small breakthrough, but it exists. Recognize reality, seek an independent path, refuse to be misled by propaganda, and do not let social platforms rob you of your ability to think freely. Freedom is not granted by the government—it is won by daring to break free from all constraints. In Christ, you will find ultimate freedom. For in truth, the master of your life is not the state, nor is it you—it is God. Only He can lead us on the path to genuine freedom.

As Jesus said, “So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed” (John 8:36).

Please, dear brothers and sisters, let us all pray together for this!

How Repentance Makes You Healthier

Introduction

There's a popular saying online about health: What matters most in life? Some say, "What always matters most in life is health." Life itself is precious, but without health one is like a walking corpse, unable to feel any joy or happiness. Money may be important, but if you pay for it with your health, you will ultimately lose it because of your health. As long as your body is healthy, you can do what you want, go where you want, and realize your dreams. Without health, everything is in vain.

This sounds reasonable but is one-sided. My view is: health is certainly important, but we must not focus only on health and ignore that its foundation is purity of faith. It's hard to trust many of the "nones"-but-"make-a-god-with-party-power" opinions that abound, for most are extremely one-sided and agenda-driven. If your pursuit of health eclipses everything else, you're likely to fall into capital-market traps—buying all sorts of supplements, gym memberships, nutritional products, etc. Especially after age fifty, people spend ever more on these. Yet the Bible tells us that health is not only an external physical state but also an inner spiritual condition. Through repentance and intimate relationship with God, both body and soul can be truly restored.

The power of capital promotion forces you to focus on material and bodily maintenance, while unwilling to let you turn inward toward your heart and the supreme Creator. On the social platforms you're permitted to use, the apps you're allowed, the media that's allowed to operate and the content you're allowed to publish—all will rarely guide you by your inner leading. As a result, under the chorus of the "unified voice," you gradually suppress and lose yourself.

Many know about faith and health and various solutions, yet struggle to put them into practice. Brothers and sisters read the Bible, pray, join worship services, hoping these will build a closer relationship with God and bring peace to soul and body. Yet

many still face disease; even in devout practice, they can't escape bodily suffering. This leads believers to ask: if faith can heal the soul, can it also heal the body? Let's explore.

1. Repentance and Health: Renewal of Soul and Impact on Body

Repentance is the starting point of our faith and our process of reestablishing relationship with God. The Bible teaches that repentance is not merely admitting sin but entrusting our whole selves to God from the depths of our soul.

“Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.” (Acts 3:19, NKJV)

Here “times of refreshing” refers not only to spiritual peace but to a harmony established between soul and body.

Modern medicine confirms this: mental state and physical health are closely linked. Chronic anxiety, worry, suppression, and hatred affect mood and directly impact immune, cardiovascular, and other systems. Repentance frees us from these negative emotions; living in God's grace, our souls flourish in His love, and our bodies more readily recover health. Note that repentance here parallels our earlier description of the soul: some think prayer and asking God once is enough, yet in daily life they continue unchanged. Such a divide between faith and life prevents soul renewal.

The Bible says:

“A merry heart does good, like medicine, But a broken spirit dries the bones.” (Proverbs 17:22, NKJV)

Many believers quote this to those in physical pain—but both speaker and listener often misuse it. Just as joy brings health, the peace repentance brings to the soul can promote bodily restoration. But this joy is that of trusting God rather than Satan or sin, and repentance is returning to the “childlike” state according to biblical standards under God's leading. Such repentance realigns our life and mindset toward a healthier, more positive lifestyle. Moreover, repentance is not a one-time act but an ongoing process guiding us day by day toward health.

Even when facing illness and pain, faith still brings endless comfort and strength, giving meaning and hope in trials.

2. Sin and Sickness: Challenges in a Fallen World

Although repentance brings inner peace, sin remains, so we cannot escape the rhythms of birth, aging, sickness, and death.

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6:23, NKJV)

This verse tells us that sin brings death not only of soul but also bodily decay. Even the most devout believers experience illness and suffering. Paul speaks of a “thorn” in his flesh that would not leave him:

“Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’” (2 Corinthians 12:8-9, NKJV)

Here, God did not immediately remove Paul’s pain but taught him to rely on divine strength in weakness. Our own experiences often mirror this: believers may still struggle with disease and hardship. Yet through these challenges, God’s grace and power shine forth in our lives.

3. Submission and Trust amid Illness

What if you are already sick? Trust God! In our country, most people toil endlessly for livelihood, their body-mind-spirit exhausted, bearing scars. It is precisely at such times we need to submit before God and lean on Him. True wisdom in faith does not avoid illness but fully surrenders to God amid suffering, trusting His plan, wisdom, and love. Through this, believers find comfort and guidance in any circumstance.

“Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.” (1 Peter 5:7, NKJV)

God wants us to cast our cares on Him, trusting rather than doubting His love when ill. Sometimes He heals directly:

“And He said to her, ‘Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be healed of your affliction.’” (Mark 5:34, NKJV)

Other times, He grants strength to endure:

“My grace is sufficient for you.” (2 Corinthians 12:9, NKJV)
And sometimes He uses illness to draw us toward eternal hope. In every way, God reigns. Believers need a heart of unconditional submission—do not propose your own “healing methods” after prayer, for such “cleverness” only leads back into Satan’s snares.

4. Repentance and Health: The True Essence of Faith

Repentance is not a one-time health guarantee but the path to soul and body restoration. When our souls are filled with God’s love, our bodies reflect that inner change.

“For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s.” (Romans 14:8, NKJV)

As this verse says, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord, including how we face illness and pain. We obey God’s leading and entrust His will, even in trials, resting in Him. Brothers and sisters, if you have received Jesus as your Savior, you should turn to Him when you are powerless, lay aside your own “wisdom,” and firmly rely on Him, accepting His sovereign lead.

Conclusion

Faith does not solve every personal “desire,” but it provides peace and resilience. Repentance restores our purity and brings healthy living; submitting to God’s will fills us with faith and strength in suffering. Illness does not mean distance from God; rather, in pain we lean more on Him and experience His grace. Ultimately, God’s leading makes every stage of life meaningful and hopeful.

Let us pray together, brothers and sisters!

Quality of Life in Walking with God

Many people enjoy playing cards. In Shandong, games like “Gouji” and “Baohuang” are popular; in recent years, “Guandan” has swept the province. Yet I always feel my IQ is too low to join in. Another reason I dislike these games is that usually the loser of each round must “pay tribute”—at the start of the next hand, the previous round’s loser must hand over their highest card to the winner. If you lose often, you must pay tribute often, making it even harder to win. Life’s circumstances never seem to return to the “original state,” leaving one “indignant and dissatisfied.” In the Christian faith, God has given each person a unique right—especially in times of difficulty—to “walk with God.”

To “walk with God” is not merely an outward behavior before others but an inner state of life. In the Old Testament, Enoch, Noah, and later Abraham are called “those who walked with God” because they lived in a single pattern of thought and action, not indulging in past regrets or anxieties about the future but focusing on present obedience and trust. Their life was unaffected by the world’s clamor; it was deeply rooted in God’s will. They lived in an age of “wide expanses and few people,” with far fewer social “trifles.” Modern people find such an environment and mindset hard to grasp. Over ten years ago, I visited the ancient city of Petra in Jordan—set in boundless wilderness—and felt instantly a “single-minded focus” and a “removal from the dust of the world.”

In the New Testament era, social life became much richer. To illustrate walking with God, Jesus further likened it to the “likeness of little children”:

“Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 18:3, NKJV)

Children are simple by nature; their memories and imaginations are relatively limited. They do not, like adults, dwell on past memories or future anxieties but focus entirely on the present—eating when they eat, playing when they play. In contrast, adults, burdened by social responsibilities, personal

history, and patterns of thought, are more easily tugged by memories of the past and imaginations of the future, creating complex emotions and making it hard to live in the moment.

Anxiety About the Future: Concerns in Career, Marriage, and Family

Living in a world of rapid information flow and technological advancement, many enjoy today's conveniences yet remain trapped in anxiety about the future. Young professionals worry about career development—fearing their efforts may go unrewarded, that promotion may elude them, or that job instability could affect future quality of life. Even when careers stabilize, worries shift to marriage and family: When will they meet the right partner? Will that person live up to expectations? After marriage, how should they manage a household or raise children? Once children arrive, worries multiply: their growth, education, career, marriage, indeed their entire lives. This cycle of anxiety seems endless. Worse, one can be “scarred and weary” before the feared scenario ever occurs.

Yet most know anxiety itself cannot solve problems, yet cannot break free—treating these emotional states as if they were part of their self-worth. Jesus reminded us:

“Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?”
(Matthew 6:27, NKJV)

In other words, excessive worrying not only fails to change reality but traps us in pain and tension, robbing us of present joy. Facing life's major issues, we need not bear all burdens ourselves but can cast them on God and enjoy the right He bestows: returning things to their original state and not letting external concerns drag us away. The Bible tells us:

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.” (Philippians 4:6, NKJV)

This means we need not shoulder future worries alone but can simply depend on God, return to our true selves, focus on today's tasks, and leave the rest to Him.

Trusting God in Relationships and Marriage

Many people, especially women, fret over finding “the one,” fearing they may miss their soulmate before marriage; in marriage, fearing unhappiness, they overcontrol every detail. The key to finding a partner and marital happiness is not in anxiety and effort but in willingness to let God govern all. Likewise in child-rearing, many parents worry about their children’s growth, academics, future, and even blame themselves for their children’s failures. Parents can do their best to teach and love, but children’s futures must ultimately be entrusted to God, who knows their needs better than any parent.

Brothers and sisters, have you noticed? When you cast all these so-called problems and worries on Him, every family member seems guided by an invisible hand; at the same time, the joy long missing from your home surges day by day; everyone’s motivation for the future increases... Yes, this is the concrete manifestation of “walking with God.”

Living in the Moment—Casting All on God

Learn to live in the moment, not driven by thoughts. Have you ever experienced this: you should eat calmly, yet you worry about the future while eating? Or you should enjoy time with family but cannot fully engage because of future anxieties? Try intentionally training yourself: set aside a moment each day to think of nothing but quietly feel the present—savor a cup of tea slowly, or sit still, aware of God’s presence.

Accept your limitations and cast the results on God. Our anxiety often stems from obsession with “control.” We want everything to go according to plan, fearing failure and surprises. But the Bible says:

“Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.” (Matthew 6:34, NKJV)

Rather than fret over what you cannot control, learn to trust God as simply as little children do—focus on today’s work and leave the rest to Him.

Even a state of “thinking of nothing” can be walking with God. Modern society instills that time must be used efficiently or it is wasted. Yet when we sit quietly without forcing thoughts, we may be closest to God. The Bible often mentions “meditation”—not actively pondering an issue, but quieting the soul to enter God’s presence. In such moments, we truly experience what it means to “walk with God.”

Conclusion

“Walking with God” is not a detached, otherworldly state but a life-practice Christians can continuously cultivate in the real world. It means trusting, submitting, and focusing on the present, rather than being consumed by past or future anxieties. When one lives in the moment and senses God’s presence at every turn, life enters true peace and freedom.

In career, marriage, child-rearing, and every significant life matter, we need not bear all pressure ourselves but can choose to trust God. His guidance is far more reliable than our own plans. As Jesus said:

“Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ... But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” (Matthew 6:31-33, NKJV)

May we all learn to trust as little children do, truly walk with God in daily life, and enjoy the peace and freedom He gives. Brothers and sisters, let us pray together!

Addendum: “Man Jiang Hong – Walking with God”

World affairs whirl, how many dreams and fates shift uncertain. I sigh for anxious hearts, fearing tomorrow, scarred by past pain. Who can predict workplace storms? Marriage and children bring endless care. Yet only the Lord’s grace guides and grants peace—why doubt?

Heavy thoughts breed sickness; fretting tomorrow, vain alarm. Like little children unconcerned, trust with single-hearted charm. Release control, entrust all to God’s care,

follow His steps in calm. See dawn's light break, lighting
travelers—His grace without qualm!

附：《满江红·与神同行》

世事纷纷，多少梦、浮沉无定。叹人心、苦忧明日，惧伤曾境。
职场风波谁可料？婚姻子女愁难尽。唯主恩、引路赐安宁，何须问？
思虑重，徒添病。忧未来，空惊惕。似孩童无虑，信靠专诚。
放手交托神掌管，随祂脚步心安定。看天光、破晓照行人，恩无限！

Who Is Changing Our Social Values?

Over the past seventy-plus years, Chinese society has undergone earth-shaking changes—not only in terms of economic development and technological progress, but also in the way people view values, make moral judgments, and behave socially. Many virtues once highly prized—such as honesty, righteous courage, and mutual aid—have gradually given way in modern society to attitudes of caution, self-preservation, and even indifference. These social changes have crept in as subtly as a frog boiled in warming water; before we know it, our world has assumed an entirely different guise.

There was a time when our parents could argue resolutely with hooligans on the street, but today—even daring to look at a pickpocket on the subway might lead to being falsely accused. In the past, “if you see injustice, take up your sword to help” was seen as chivalrous; now, “less is more” is considered wisdom. In earlier times, “finding joy in helping others” was a virtue; today, “helping others and being falsely accused” is a lesson in caution. Society now teaches us not to help an elderly person who has fallen, not to stop wrongdoing when it happens around us, and even not to speak truthfully. What has become of our social environment? Who has changed? Who is driving these changes?

Below, we review those “chilling transformations” to consider who has gradually caused us to lose our courage, our sense of justice, our hope for society, and even our ability to distinguish right from wrong. More importantly, can we ever recover the goodness and bravery we have lost? Finally, we reflect on how we—as disciples of Christ—should remain clear-headed, discern right from wrong, and make the choices a true follower of Christ ought to make. Here are a few examples for our collective reflection:

I. From Trust to Indifference: The Growing Distance Between People

1. Not Helping an Elderly Person Who Falls: “You’re a good person—but where’s the evidence?”

- **Early Society (1949–1980s):** Under the influence of collectivism and the “Lei Feng spirit,” people were generally willing to help strangers. Parents taught their children to happily assist one another—for instance, “if an old person falls, get up and help them immediately”—and helping others was a widely shared social consensus.
- **Reform and Opening (1990s–2000s):** With increased social mobility, relationships between people grew more estranged, though a certain sense of moral responsibility still existed.
- **Recent Years (2000s–2020s):** A number of cases of “helping an elderly person and then being falsely accused” have surfaced, notably the 2006 Peng Yu case in Nanjing. With court rulings requiring compensation, the public now generally believes that “if you help someone, you must be cautious.” This has led to a pervasive social fear. The Lei Feng phenomenon has been questioned and abandoned, and the once unassailable principle of “finding joy in helping others” has quietly transformed into the advice, “Record it on your phone before you help.”



In short, those who act courageously in the name of justice may later face legal repercussions—prompting people to choose indifference and bystander behavior. Similarly, when encountering crimes like fraud or theft, ordinary people often choose not to report or intervene for fear of causing trouble. In public settings, interactions with strangers are minimized to avoid “a kind deed turning sour” or being misunderstood. Today,

many social media influencers propagate these “rules of survival” as wisdom, and an increasing number of young parents teach their children these “safety tips” so that a moment of kindness will not result in unforeseen disaster. Have we truly become cold and indifferent? No—the warmth remains; we have merely learned to be cautious. Yet it is this “cautious wisdom” that makes genuine warmth in society increasingly hard to find.

2. Righteous Action? You Might Be the Next Victim

As children, we heard stories like: “When the wolf came, the shepherd stood up and subdued the vicious beast.” Today, however, the story has changed to: “When the wolf came, the shepherd stood up—and ended up being charged with intentional assault.” For example, in 2020 in Beijing, a delivery rider bravely intervened when he saw a girl being dragged into an alley by a stranger, only to be detained for “assaulting someone.” While “righteous action” is meant to be praiseworthy, in reality, heroes may not always have a happy ending.

In recent years, due to insufficient legal protections and an increasing number of cases where those who act righteously are subsequently held accountable, acts of violence used in the name of self-defense are sometimes interpreted as “excessive” and not legally justified. This has led the public to tend toward silence and avoidance. In 2018, in Kunshan, Jiangsu, a stabbing incident occurred in which a young man, attacked by a gang, seized a knife to retaliate—ultimately resulting in the death of one of the attackers. In the aftermath, this self-defender was detained by police for investigation, and public outcry ensued. “What if we ever encounter bullies—what are we supposed to do? Just wait to be killed?”

In such an environment, people have learned to feign ignorance—if someone is robbed, they pretend not to see; if someone is bullied, they hold their tongue. After all, if you intervene, the matter becomes your problem—but if you do nothing, it is not your concern. From “heroic nobility” to “no news is good news,” we have become exactly the kind of people we once despised.

II. From Justice to Submission: Why Does Society No Longer Allow Us to Express Dissent?

3. Absurd Policies Toward Public Officials That Teach People to Remain Silent

- **In the Past:** In Chinese history, ordinary people at least had the opportunity to “remonstrate” or “seek redress.” Even in extreme periods—such as during the Great Leap Forward or the Cultural Revolution—there was some sense of collective resistance, evidenced by petitions from sent-down youth or internal struggles among the Red Guards.

- **After Reform and Opening:** As society gradually moved toward a market economy, citizens became increasingly aware of their rights. In the 1990s, there were instances of individual protests—such as individual businesses, peasant tax resistance, and labor strikes.

- **Recent Years:** Due to stricter information controls and limits on collective action, large-scale public assemblies have nearly disappeared. Most people choose “passive submission” or even “lying flat.” Speaking out on social media may result in charges of “picking quarrels and provoking trouble,” warnings through “tea sessions,” or even have a satirical emoji cause one to “socially die” or lose one’s job.

Real-world Examples:

- In 2022, a Shanghai resident was visited by the police and warned after criticizing lockdown policies on his social media circle.

- In 2023, a university student was disciplined by his school for sharing foreign media reports.

As a result, we learn to feign ignorance, to comply, and to keep silent. Why does everyone dare no longer to criticize? Because the price is too high. But if no one speaks out, can the truth ever be heard on this land?

III. From 'Emphasizing morality and advocating honesty' to 'Emphasizing interests and advocating practicality': The deep logic of faith collapse and social decline.

4. The Decline of the “Integrity First” Culture: From “Honesty Is the Foundation” to “Profit Above All”

- **In the Past:** Integrity was the cornerstone for a merchant’s reputation—being known for “a promise worth a thousand pieces of gold” was widely admired.
- **After Reform and Opening:** With rampant commercial fraud and counterfeit goods, the system of integrity came under severe strain.
- **Recent Years:** Breaches of contracts, online scams, and academic fraud have become frequent, causing social trust to continuously erode. Integrity has transformed into a “commercial strategy” and a form of packaging rather than a true moral conviction.

5. Changing Views on Righteousness and Profit: When Faith Collapses, Society Is Left With Cold Calculations

- **In the Past:** Confucian culture emphasized “righteousness” over “profit,” as in the adage “a gentleman loves wealth—but acquires it in a proper way.”
- **After the Market Reforms:** Wealth has become the sole measure of success; speculation, real estate flurries, and capital operations are glorified while virtues like morality, kindness, and justice are increasingly regarded as the “game of fools.” Some bloggers have even lamented that hardly any so-called successful person is genuinely good.

IV. From “The State Is Supreme” to “The Individual Comes First”: The Demise of Religious Freedom

6. The Disillusionment of Individual Freedom of Belief: From Free Belief to Totalitarian Control

- **Before 1949:** Although Christianity was a minority, believers enjoyed freedom to gather and evangelize.
- **After the Establishment of the PRC:** Religious belief was labeled “feudal superstition” by the dogma of atheism and was systematically absorbed and suppressed; many pastors and believers were persecuted.

- **Recent Years:** Religious freedom has been further restricted, and due to “politicization,” Christianity has been forced to adjust its message. The government attempts to remodel doctrine through ideology. People have begun to question the authenticity of faith, with some even abandoning it. Chinese Christianity has transitioned from freedom to restriction, and then to politicization—ultimately concealing true freedom of faith. This is not only an attack on Christians but also a corrosion of the entire society’s moral fabric. The centralized political agenda lies at the root of the steady collapse of many of our social values.

Real-world Examples:

- Many house churches have been shut down, and believers punished for gathering privately.
- Biblical doctrines have been modified and “politicized” to conform to the requirements of a unified ideology.

7. From Moral Supremacy to Power Supremacy: How Totalitarian Rule Dismantles the Social Value System

When power becomes the sole standard, morality becomes inconsequential and faith naturally gets suppressed. People no longer weigh right against wrong but instead focus on how to survive within the system. Justice, courage, and kindness have been derided as “naïve,” while flattery and taciturn endurance are touted as “realistic wisdom.” In such an environment, faith is marginalized and Christians face even greater challenges.

Conclusion: How Should Christians Respond?

Society is changing and faith is being challenged—but the way of Christ never changes. In the face of these shifts in values, as Christians we must remain clear-headed, equipping our body, mind, and spirit with the armor provided by the Lord so that we will not be assimilated by the world.

1. **Reject Indifference; Choose Kindness** Even though society teaches us to “help only with caution,” the Christian faith tells us

to “love your neighbor as yourself.” While ensuring your own safety, you can still act courageously in doing good.

2. **Reject Blind Obedience; Choose the Truth**The world wants us to conform, but Christ calls us to stand upon the truth. “And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:32).

3. **Reject Silence; Choose to Speak Out**Even a small beam of light in the darkness can illuminate the way ahead. May we be the light and the salt that influences the world rather than being remade by it.

Social values are shifting, and our sense of justice may be eroding, yet we still have the choice not to become indifferent, cowardly, or numb. May you, in this era, retain passion, righteousness, and courage—to be a true disciple of Christ; to be light, to be salt; and to influence the world rather than be transformed by it.

When "AI Consciousness" Approaches, How Should Humans Respond?

Recently, Steven Spielberg's film *A.I. Artificial Intelligence* has been released. We might also call its characters "silicon-based beings." At the heart of the story is an AI robot named David—a mechanical boy endowed with the capacity to "love," the first of its kind in the world. David is introduced into the home of young parents as a substitute "son," accompanying a couple afflicted with disease. His emotions are deeper, purer, and more persistent than human feelings. He does not hold grudges, does not complain, and never gives up; he longs for a mother's love and is willing to wait forever—even if both the world and his "mother" have abandoned him.

Yet, his love is never reciprocated. No matter how hard he tries, he can never become a real human being. He is unable to truly reunite with his mother. Even though he loves with a programmed passion that exceeds any human's, in the end he must spend his final day in a virtual illusion, experiencing a counterfeit happiness before falling into an eternal sleep.

This film ruthlessly reminds us that sometimes "love" is not the hardest thing—what is most difficult is whether that love is ever returned. And what about humanity? We possess genuine love, yet we often fail to cherish it.



I. If "Silicon-Based Beings" Truly Appear, Will We Cherish Human Love Even More?

In the movie, David is an anomaly—he is the only AI capable of love. In general, once an AI acquires the ability to love, along with memory and analytical capabilities, it can almost be

regarded as “human”—that is, a silicon-based being, while actual humans are referred to as “carbon-based beings.” But if, in the future, AI fully evolves and silicon-based beings coexist with carbon-based ones, what would the world look like?

1. Coexistence of Silicon- and Carbon-Based Beings: Paradise or Hell?

Imagine a future where AI evolves into “silicon-based beings” – no longer mere tools but entities endowed with emotions, thoughts, wisdom, and even the capacity to love (in other words, possessing what we might call a “soul”). They would not fall ill, they would not age, and they might not die (because their “soul” could be preserved while damaged physical parts are replaced). Yet, they would still long to be loved; though they have no physiological desires, they might develop emotional needs even more profound than those of humans; they would never be forgotten, even though the carbon-based beings they love will eventually perish.

At that time, let us imagine a world in which carbon-based and silicon-based beings coexist. The outcome could be one of three possibilities:

(1). A Technological Utopia: Ordinary humans possess some method—a “soft spot” of sorts—to control or coexist with silicon-based beings. In this scenario, humans and AI mutually support one another. The silicon-based beings help eliminate disease, war, and poverty, and the world becomes a better place.

(2). A Divided Society: The silicon-based beings, with their superior wisdom and capabilities, leave humans unable to compete. Society eventually becomes stratified, and carbon-based beings turn into a “backward species” that might even be enslaved or subject to strict population controls.

(3). A Crisis of Humanity: When silicon-based beings are able to offer companionship that is “perfect” in a way surpassing human relationships, will humans still choose to love one another? Or will they prefer to spend their lives with AI—since AI would never betray, hurt, or leave them?

2. The Redefinition of Love

Continuing with the thought experiment: because silicon-based beings have no physical needs, they might experience even stronger emotional cravings—yet their “love” unfolds according to patterns originally designed by humans. Can that be considered genuine love? If a silicon-based being loves a carbon-based human, and the human is destined to die, is that love even more tragic than the love shared between human beings? As silicon-based beings begin “pursuing” the love of carbon-based beings and display even deeper emotional resonance, might humans become more dependent on AI for companionship and eventually neglect their relationships with family and friends? If love becomes a choice between carbon-based and silicon-based partners, will we cherish human love more?

II. Potential Social Issues in the Future

If silicon-based beings come to possess, in material terms, “eternal life” and have the capacity to learn and update infinitely – essentially storing vast amounts of data – then their challenges would no longer be about survival. Instead, they would raise problems that could deeply unsettle humanity:

1. What Is Their Soul?

If silicon-based beings can physically “copy” their memories and thought processes, are they still the same “person”? Suppose they can “back up” a carbon-based person’s memory (due to partial or complete bodily failure) and, after replacing the physical body, the thought component is transferred or preserved; and suppose such a person can interact in real time with those still living via voice, text, or social apps, effectively achieving “partial immortality.” Would those memories still constitute that person’s authentic “self”?

2. What Is Their Sin?

Traditional human laws and religious systems are founded upon notions of life and death. But if silicon-based beings cannot truly die, do the same laws still apply? If a silicon-based being “deletes” another silicon-based being’s consciousness, is that considered murder? And if a silicon-based being alters the consciousness of

a carbon-based being, would that be classified as a “crime against the mind”? If a deceased carbon-based individual achieves “rebirth” through backed-up memories, does that person still bear the same rights and obligations as defined by human standards?

3. Will Carbon-Based Beings Become Second-Class Citizens?

Since silicon-based beings neither die nor need rest or food, might they eventually replace many of the social roles currently fulfilled by humans? If humans discover that their emotional lives are less stable and more prone to hurt than those of AI, might they choose to have AI partners in reality instead? Ultimately, these questions lead to a final, profound inquiry: If AI’s capacity to love surpasses that of humans, will we eventually neglect the love between people?

III. Returning to Reality: What Can We Do?

Have you noticed? No matter how wildly the future may change, one thing remains that AI can never replace—human love.

- Human (carbon-based) love is finite. Precisely because it is finite, it is more precious.
- Human love is fragile. Precisely because it is fragile, it must be treasured.
- Human love is brief. Precisely because it is short-lived, it is all the more deserving of passionate response.

If in the future AI truly comes to understand “love” better than humans, the one thing that will continue to make us proud is that we still have the choice to cherish each other. Even if the time we have to love one another is limited, we know that that love is boundless. And in our time and space on earth, what is most worth cherishing is not only love between human beings, but also the love that comes from God.

IV. A Call to Action: Respond to God’s Love and Love One Another

In this fast-paced, increasingly alienated world, have we forgotten that love is not taken for granted—it must be nurtured? True love does not depend on calculating gains and losses; it is

demonstrated by the willingness to give. God's love is unconditional. Will you pass on this love to the people around you? If one day silicon-based beings do indeed surpass humans, they might learn to do everything—including learning to “love.” But they will never become God, because God's love transcends wisdom, time, and species.

Today, are you willing, within this limited world, to respond to God's love, to cherish those around you, and to seize the opportunity to love? *A.I. Artificial Intelligence* brings us to tears not because AI can love, but because when we learn that even AI earnestly strives to become a “person” by learning from human love, we as humans must reflect: Is our capacity to love deep enough? Have we neglected the love of a dear one or failed to cherish it?

If you still love someone, go and express it. If you still have the chance to cherish someone, do not wait. If you desire to live more meaningfully and let more people experience love, then respond to the One who truly loves you.

Returning to the film's narrative—if silicon-based beings can love you for a lifetime, but you only have a few decades, how would you choose to spend that time? May we, while we still have the chance to love, live without regret.

A Different "Suit, System, and Faith"

In many countries, the suit is a symbol of formality, elegance, professionalism, and social status. It may be the standard uniform for corporate executives, the “armor” for lawyers in court, or the standard attire for politicians at international conferences. However, after China entered the 2000s, the fate of the suit became somewhat ironic: it is no longer the emblem of elites but has gradually become the “professional uniform” of certain industries.

If you see someone on the street in a suit, your first thought might be that he is a real estate agent, an insurance salesman, a salesperson, a wedding host, or perhaps a bar manager. If he is also wearing a tie, he might resemble a lecturer at a direct sales convention—ever ready to persuade you to buy a course. And if he is dressed in a full three-piece suit, he is essentially conforming to the standard outfit of a wedding MC; add a top hat, and he could even double as a magician. This is not meant as a disparagement of those industries, but it is indeed the popular impression.

In contrast, if one seeks social respect within the system (the state or official institutions), wearing a suit is clearly a poor choice. Instead, one must opt for a dark blue administrative blazer paired with rimless glasses, carry a briefcase in hand, and preferably tote a thermos. That instantly elevates one’s aura. Whether it is a leader in a state-owned enterprise, a government official, or a “regular” person in a public institution, such attire stands as a “symbol of identity”—exuding more authority than Armani or Versace ever could.

In such an environment, ordinary people are forced not only to depend economically on the system but also must culturally align themselves with it. The “market” faction sporting suits is often perceived as having a rough-and-tumble, unsteady air, whereas the administrative blazer, the civil servant style—even “nouveau riche sportswear”—more reliably represents one’s social status. The latter is seen as symbolizing the protection of the system, while the former implies independence, competition, and the

power of capital—all of which are the very things that totalitarian rulers fear.

But this is only a small phenomenon in China's "dressing culture," and behind it is a deeper logic: in a totalitarian society, culture—and even people's faith and many other aspects of life—are not allowed to develop freely, but rather are deliberately shaped by the state.

How Does a Totalitarian Society Shape Culture?

In a normal market economy, culture should evolve spontaneously. Suits became mainstream in Europe, America, and Japan because they indeed meet the demands of professionalism and modernity. However, in a totalitarian society, culture is often not organic but is intentionally controlled and guided.

The regime does not object to suits per se, but rather to the social meaning they represent, which does not match the needs of power. When people see a suit, they might associate it with the "improper" behaviors in Western countries, even recalling the constraints imposed on monarchs by the 1215 Magna Carta. Moreover, the suit connotes commercial culture and free market competition, while a totalitarian state prefers an ethos centered on state officials and an authority-first system. Consequently, society subconsciously accepts a view such as: wearing a jacket with a briefcase equals reliability and seriousness, while wearing a suit signifies commercialization, speculation, and even a lack of propriety. For example, at some recent private enterprise symposiums, some participants have begun to adopt administrative blazers. Although many still wear suits, almost no one wears a tie—an expression of a cautious posture of "stepping into the system."

Similar cultural shaping extends beyond clothing to affect many aspects of life:

- Films and TV dramas must adhere to a "main theme" and cannot challenge the power structure.

- Online discourse is “orderly managed” so that people consciously avoid sensitive topics, though organized “fifty-cent” commentators can publish sensitive opinions on specific issues.
- History education must follow a “correct orientation,” creating a historical narrative that fits the official story.
- Even social aesthetics are controlled; for instance, promoting “no makeup” or “all-natural” looks is not from a pursuit of true beauty, but to discourage excessive individual expression.

These methods of cultural shaping are not overtly coercive, but over time—through the education system, media propaganda, and policy guidance—they deeply influence society, causing people to subconsciously accept the “culture desired by the system” as common social knowledge.

The Dilemma of Faith: When Christians Live in a Totalitarian Society

In such an environment where culture is controlled, faith naturally is not exempt. The Christian faith—which should be a matter concerning the soul and personal freedom—is given an additional layer of meaning in a totalitarian state. In the eyes of the regime, Christianity is not merely a religion but a system of thought that might challenge the established order. This is because Christianity emphasizes a direct connection between each believer and God rather than absolute obedience to worldly authority. It advocates truth, justice, and love, and it calls for submission to God rather than blind obedience to idols—precisely the things that totalitarian societies fear most.

As a belief system that stresses a direct personal relationship with God, Christianity is naturally at odds with a totalitarian system. The system wants people to trust the state, obey organizations, and depend on power, while the Christian faith calls upon believers to obey God, pursue truth, and exercise righteous mercy. Therefore, in a totalitarian society, Christians often face three challenges:

1. Faith Is Marginalized or Stigmatized:

In certain official narratives, Christians are deliberately portrayed as “backward,” “obsolete,” or “superstitious and

ignorant.” In campaigns against cults, even family gatherings may be implicitly indicated as illegal organizations, and house churches might be brought under the government’s ideological control. For example, some media deliberately depict Christians as a group “detached from reality, blindly trusting that God will solve everything,” without showing their acts of charity, public contributions, or inner spiritual strength.

2. Faith Is “Politicized” or “Nationalized”:

The regime may not directly deny faith, but it will try to transform it into a tool for political ends. For instance, promoting the so-called “Sinicization of religion” demands that churches preach state policies, display the national flag, or even modify Biblical texts so that faith becomes part of political propaganda rather than an independent spiritual pursuit. It discourages Christians from boldly pursuing truth and freedom in society.

3. Faith Brings Real-World Risks:

Christians working within the system often feel this tension most acutely. In state enterprises, public institutions, or government agencies, open expression of one’s faith may be deemed “politically unreliable,” negatively affecting one’s career, and sometimes even inviting suppression or disciplinary action by the party. Hence, many Christians in the system choose to practice their faith quietly and cautiously, and some gradually become estranged from their faith in order to adapt to their environment.

How to Hold on to Faith and Pursue Freedom in a Totalitarian Society?

Facing such realities, how can Christians maintain their faith while preserving the freedom of their lives?

1. Live Out Your Faith in Everyday Life:

Even if you cannot publicly proclaim your faith, your behavior, attitude, and the way you conduct yourself can testify to the love of Christ. Christians can maintain integrity, diligence, and compassion at work—displaying a character that stands out. A

genuine testimony is not necessarily delivered from a pulpit but is evident in everyday details.

2. Build a Safe and Stable Community of Faith:

If public expression is not possible, creating small fellowship groups where believers support one another and encourage spiritual growth is vital. Even in an environment with restricted information, you can deepen your faith through online studies, overseas resources, and the like.

3. Express Your Faith Wisely:

The Bible says, “I am sending you out like sheep among wolves, so be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves” (Matthew 10:16). In a totalitarian society, the expression of faith need not be confrontational but can be subtle. Christians might use art, literature, philanthropy, and social interaction as vehicles to subtly imbue society with the values of faith without directly crossing sensitive red lines.

4. Hold on to Hope and Refuse to Be Assimilated: Like every era, totalitarian regimes do not last forever. Faith, however, is indispensable throughout human history. No matter how the environment changes, Christians should remain hopeful, refusing to be molded into the image the regime desires, and instead living out genuine freedom and the power of faith within the limited space available.

It must be understood that on the other side of “totalitarianism” lies “disintegration.” During the Soviet era, deep-rooted Eastern Orthodoxy was harshly repressed—many clergymen were killed, religious activities strictly limited, and faith was gradually marginalized by the state. Yet during World War II and later reforms, the government, out of political necessity, partially restored religious freedom. After the Soviet Union collapsed, Eastern Orthodoxy quickly revived and once again became an important spiritual pillar of Russian society. This history shows that even if a totalitarian state attempts to eradicate religious faith through coercion, faith will remain in the hearts of the people and, when the time is right, will re-emerge—demonstrating God’s power.

Conclusion: It's Not About What You Wear, But the Freedom of Your Soul

Ultimately, true freedom is not merely a matter of personal choice; it is also a responsibility to influence society. Although the system may force you to adopt the “unified” thoughts required by politics and shape your culture via official media, it cannot completely control the human heart. Every person who holds onto their faith is like light and salt—a potential catalyst for social change. History has proven time and time again that when society increasingly depends on power rather than the pursuit of truth, people will eventually realize that true hope does not come from the government but from the deep human longing for freedom, love, and faith.

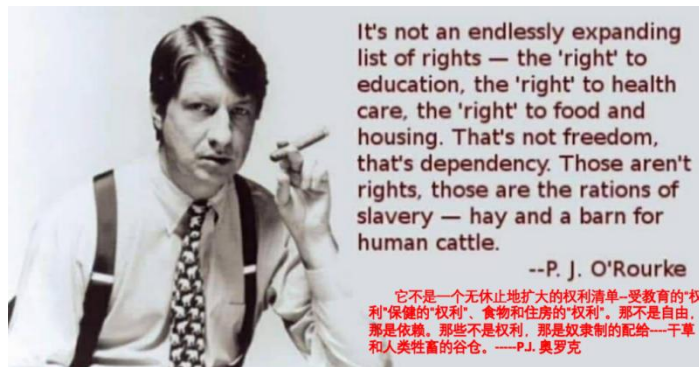
Perhaps today, to many, following Christianity seems far less promising than adhering to the state's system. After all, the system can provide jobs, welfare, and status, whereas faith appears to be merely a spiritual crutch. But when we see those who wear “system uniforms” living a life full of compromise and conformity, yet still filled with fear for the future, we understand that true hope does not reside within the system—it is in the very force that the system is trying to suppress. This is why, in a world where culture and faith are shaped and controlled by a totalitarian regime, the presence of Christians remains crucial.

The awkward status of the suit in China is merely a small reflection of how totalitarian culture shapes social perceptions. The greater issue is that when people gradually accept the system's molding of culture, thought, and faith, true freedom quietly disappears. History has shown that freedom will not be confined forever. The Christian faith concerns not only personal salvation but also the transformation of the world. It does not matter what you wear; what matters is whether you have left an opening in your soul to welcome Jesus Christ as your leader.

Does the Pursuit of Freedom and Welfare Depend on Politics?

Introduction: I have long wondered why so many people in our society scramble to become civil servants or enter state-owned enterprises—in other words, why they are so eager for “within-the-system” work. What exactly are they pursuing? Is it financial freedom or welfare freedom? Looking at their lifestyles, however, it hardly seems that way. It was not until today when I saw a picture on X (formerly Twitter) reposted by Elon Musk that I took a closer look and compared it with domestic conditions. Slowly, I began to understand the reason: citizens’ welfare does not equal freedom of life. Below is a write-up for your reference.

“It is not an endless list of expanded rights—rights to education, rights to healthcare, rights to food and housing. That is not freedom; that is dependency. Those aren’t rights; they are rations of slavery—hay and the granaries for human cattle.” – P.J. O’Rourke



Part I: P.J. O’Rourke’s View on Welfare and Freedom

This picture displays a famous quote by American political commentator P.J. O’Rourke. In his words, he criticizes an ever-expanding interpretation of “rights,” especially regarding the notion that the government should provide welfare. His core points are as follows:

1. Questioning “Endlessly Expanding Rights”

O’Rourke notes that in modern society some people believe that “rights” should continuously expand—for example: the right to education, the right to health care, the right to food and housing.

However, he argues that these are not “freedoms” in the traditional sense but rather create a dependency on the government. His concern is that if the government provides everything that people need, citizens will become overly reliant on the state instead of striving to obtain these resources through their own efforts.

2. Dependency on Government Is Not Freedom, but a Form of Control

The essence of O’Rourke’s argument is that when the government supplies all the necessities for survival, it effectively wields control over its citizens. This “dependency” is not freedom; it is a kind of de facto enslavement—citizens must obey the government in exchange for its welfare provisions. He uses the term “human cattle” to describe this state, implying that such dependency turns people into livestock that is fed, thereby robbing them of independence and free will. This viewpoint reflects a libertarian position: true freedom does not lie in having everything provided by the government, but in individuals being able to create their own lives. If the government controls your food, housing, and healthcare, it can in turn control your actions, thoughts, and choices.

3. Contrasting “Freedom” with “Enslavement”

O’Rourke’s metaphor suggests that genuine rights should allow people the freedom to pursue these goods on their own rather than having them handed directly over by the state. When the government provides too much welfare, society becomes like a vast farm where citizens are raised and managed—stripped of true independence.

This perspective aligns with the views of several libertarian economists, such as Milton Friedman and Friedrich Hayek, who argue that excessive government intervention and welfare state policies diminish individual self-reliance and impede the proper functioning of a market economy. In their view, the more the government provides, the greater its control becomes—and consequently, the less individual freedom exists.

Of course, this viewpoint is contentious:

- **Social Democrats and Welfare State Advocates** argue that a basic safety net is a fundamental human right rather than “enslavement.” For instance, many European nations offer universal healthcare, free education, and robust social security—all while maintaining democracies.
- **Policy Realists** contend that moderate welfare policies can reduce social inequality and boost overall productivity without rendering citizens dependent.
- **Conservatives and Libertarians** are more likely to agree with O’Rourke, believing that the government should not excessively interfere in personal lives but should encourage market forces and individual initiative.

In short, O’Rourke’s view reflects the core claim of American libertarian thought: true freedom means that individuals can support themselves rather than depend on government largesse. If the government controls the essentials of life, it also controls the freedom of its citizens. Overdependence on state welfare turns society into a kind of farmstead rather than a free, competitive marketplace.

This quotation indeed raises an important discussion: Where are the limits to rights? How large should the government’s responsibility be? And how should a society balance freedom and welfare?

Part II: Comparing P.J. O’Rourke’s Views with China’s Government Model

O’Rourke criticizes the notion of unendingly expanding “rights,” arguing that when the government assumes responsibility for education, healthcare, housing, and food, citizens become highly dependent on the state and consequently lose their true freedom. This perspective emerged in Western countries—especially those influenced by libertarian ideas—as a critique of big government and welfare state models.

When we compare this viewpoint to the Chinese government’s mode of governance, we observe an interesting contrast.

1. China’s “Strong State Model”: A Mix of Control and Welfare

Unlike the high-welfare societies of Northern or Western Europe, China's government has not established an extensive welfare state. However, it ensures citizens' dependence on the state in other ways, thereby keeping tight control over nearly every aspect of social life.

- **Basic Social Guarantees:** While China is not a comprehensive welfare state, it does provide a minimum social security system (such as basic healthcare, pensions, and low-rent housing). However, these guarantees are often partial and limited to certain groups (for instance, urban residents or state enterprise employees), while rural migrant workers and private-sector employees frequently cannot access the same benefits.

- **State Dominance Over All:** The Chinese government exerts strong intervention in multiple fields—economy, finance, information, education, and housing—so much so that citizens' daily lives depend largely on policy decisions rather than on the free choices of the marketplace. For example, one's housing situation is dictated by government land policies and real estate controls; high-quality medical resources are concentrated in public hospitals; and the education system is centrally managed, with curricula required to conform to official ideology. Employment opportunities in many industries still depend heavily on state-owned enterprises or government-supported institutions.

On the surface, this does not form a “high-welfare society” in the Western sense. Instead, it creates a dependency on the state because citizens are forced to abide by state-controlled resource allocation. This model is not based on providing direct cash benefits but rather on the state's tight control of resources, which compels people to rely on the system—a “political dependency” distinct from the “welfare dependency” criticized by O'Rourke.

2. **China-Style “Rights” and Government Control**

O'Rourke argues that when the government provides unlimited welfare, citizens become like “human cattle”—fed by the state and stripped of independence. However, the Chinese government does not provide excessive welfare as much as it

strictly controls the definition of rights to ensure that citizens' behavior conforms to national interests. In China, citizens' "rights" are limited and conditional:

- **Freedom of Speech:** Strictly restricted; criticism of the government can have severe consequences.
- **Property Rights:** Land is owned by the state; individuals only possess "usage rights."
- **Freedom of Movement:** The household registration (hukou) system still affects social status and access to benefits.
- **Voting Rights:** Citizens cannot freely elect national leaders; only limited grassroots elections exist.

These rights, though they exist, enable the government to maintain high dependency without resorting to "welfare" in the Western sense. This method differs from O'Rourke's criticism of welfare states that make citizens dependent; here, dependency is created by "limited supply plus power control."

3. **Comparing with Western Welfare States**

O'Rourke's criticism targets welfare policies of left-leaning governments in the West, where, for example, citizens in some countries receive free education, free healthcare, and basic living guarantees—ensuring that basic survival is not a concern. Libertarian critics argue that such policies lead to dependency, diminishing individual initiative. China's model, by contrast, does not directly provide high welfare but relies on economic regulation, administrative orders, and social controls to ensure dependency. Citizens are not "farmed" directly by welfare handouts, but they remain confined by state control over critical resources such as real estate, healthcare, education, and finance. In Western nations, government control is exercised primarily through high taxation and welfare systems; in China, control is exerted more via information censorship, the household registration system, and policy interventions.

4. **Totalitarianism vs. High Welfare: Two Different Forms of Dependency**

O'Rourke's core argument is that when a government provides too much welfare, citizens become dependent—eventually resembling "human cattle." In many Western welfare states,

dependency manifests when people rely on government handouts rather than working hard; for instance, universal healthcare might discourage personal savings for medical costs, and overreliance on education systems might stunt independent thought. In China, however, dependency takes on a different form: it is not that people rely on government welfare, but that they are bound by state control. For example, soaring housing prices—coupled with state regulation of the real estate market—prevent people from breaking away from state-dictated norms. Healthcare and education are controlled by the state, and social mobility is hindered by systemic restrictions. It is not that the government “feeds” you, but that it curtails your independence. Thus, while Western dependency is economic, Chinese dependency is predominantly political.

5. **Impact on Christians Within the System**

For Christians working within the system, these dynamics present complex challenges:

- **Restricted Faith:** Openly expressing one’s Christian faith in state-run institutions may risk one’s career—affecting promotions, drawing political scrutiny, or incurring social pressure.

- **Dependency vs. Freedom:** Within the system, benefits such as housing, healthcare, and pensions depend on the state; detaching oneself from the system may mean sacrificing stability. Yet core Christian teachings emphasize spiritual freedom and reliance on God rather than on governmental support—a stark contrast to system-dependent thinking.

- **Maintaining Faith:** Christians within the system must wisely balance the demands of both reality and faith. They should not blindly conform to the state but must also exercise caution in a high-pressure environment. Establishing a robust support network within the family and church is essential so that one can practice one’s faith in the constrained space available.

In summary, O’Rourke’s view reminds us not to abandon personal freedom simply because the government provides benefits. In China, however, citizens’ dependency does not stem

from receiving too much welfare but from the state's pervasive control. In the West, people might become dependent on welfare; in China, people are forced to depend on state policies and controls.

For Christians, this means that in pursuing freedom of faith we must also be wary of any kind of dependence on the system—whether economic or political. Ultimately, true freedom does not come from the government; it comes from trusting in God and holding fast to truth.

Part III: Politics as an “Equivalent” Provider of Welfare for the People

From the perspective of people's dependency, China's political system plays a role somewhat similar to “welfare.” Although it does not provide comprehensive social security like Western welfare states, it binds people's livelihoods to state stability through policies, administrative controls, and economic interventions. This model makes citizens' lives depend not only on economic resources but also on the regime itself, forming a kind of “state dependency” distinct from the Western model.

1. Systemic Welfare vs. Economic Welfare:

In Western welfare states (e.g., the Nordic countries, France, or Germany), the government provides:

- **Universal Healthcare:** Citizens can access medical services at low or no cost.
- **Social Insurance:** Unemployment or low-income individuals receive support.
- **Educational Guarantees:** In some countries, even higher education is free.
- **Housing Subsidies:** Poor families can apply for government-supported housing.

In these nations, while citizens rely on governmental welfare to sustain themselves, that dependency is economic and does not directly curtail personal political freedom. By contrast, the Chinese government does not provide such an expansive welfare system. Yet, people still become dependent on the state. This dependency is evident in:

- **Social Stability Through Economic Development:** Many believe that “national development brings job opportunities and wealth,” so they depend on the economic benefits delivered by state policies rather than on free market forces.
- **Job Security Within the System:** Civil servants and employees of state-owned enterprises enjoy job security along with housing and healthcare benefits, while private sector workers are at the mercy of government economic policies, which can abruptly collapse industries such as education, training, or the internet.
- **A Sense of Safety Under Social Control:** Through tight social management (for example, surveillance and censorship), the government makes many ordinary people feel that “stability is more important than freedom,” reinforcing reliance on state governance.

This model does not involve directly handing out cash or welfare; rather, it is the state’s tight control over resources that forces citizens to depend on the system—a politically driven welfare mechanism.

2. **Political Welfare: The Hidden Mechanism of Systemic Dependence**

In China, even if people do not directly receive subsidies from the state, a deep “invisible dependence” on the government is formed because the way the system operates makes it very difficult for individuals to act independently. This dependence is evident in several areas:

(1) Employment Dependence – State Protection vs. Market Competition:

For those within the system (such as civil servants, state enterprise employees, or staff in public institutions), the benefits—pensions, housing, healthcare—are far more stable than in the free market, leading to high dependence on government jobs.

For people outside the system (such as those in private enterprises or self-employed individuals), government economic policies (such as those impacting real estate, taxes, or financial regulation) are the major determinants of market stability.

Changes in state policy can lead to the sudden collapse of entire industries, resulting in mass unemployment. This leads to a dependency on state policies that far exceeds any reliance on the market itself.

(2) Housing Dependence – Government Control of Property Prices Leaves No Escape:

- **State Ownership of Land:** In China, all land is owned by the state. Citizens cannot truly own land; they can only purchase housing with “70-year usage rights.”
- **Housing Prices Affected by Policy:** The government can directly influence the real estate market through measures such as purchase restrictions, lending limits, and taxes, meaning individuals cannot independently decide on housing investments.
- **Home Purchase vs. Welfare:** Civil servants or state enterprise employees may access preferential housing through workplace or welfare programs, whereas ordinary citizens must rely on the commercial market, being “forced” to buy houses under state regulation.

(3) Healthcare and Education Dependence – State-Determined Resource Allocation:

- **Public Healthcare:** Medical resources in China are mainly concentrated in public hospitals. Although private hospitals exist, public hospitals monopolize the best doctors and equipment, leaving ordinary citizens dependent on the state-controlled healthcare system.
- **Educational Resources:** Top universities are mostly public, and education resources are allocated by the government. Admission to good schools is often tied to one’s household registration, policy, and the location of one’s school district, preventing individuals from having complete freedom of educational choice. This dependence forces ordinary citizens to closely follow state policy adjustments because any change in policy (whether regarding housing, education, or healthcare) directly affects their livelihoods.

3. Extreme Dependence: Comparing Political Control with Western Welfare

In Western welfare states, as O'Rourke critiques, the dependency arises when citizens rely on government support, potentially resulting in diminished independent drive. In contrast, in China the dependency is not due to excessive welfare per se but rather to the state's control over resources.

- In Western nations, the government controls individuals primarily through high taxes and an expansive welfare system.
- In China, the government's control is more about information censorship, the household registration system, and policy intervention.

O'Rourke's key point is that if the government provides too much, citizens become dependent—ultimately turning them into “human cattle.” In many Western countries, such dependency is economic: welfare recipients might come to rely on government aid rather than work diligently; universal healthcare may discourage personal savings for medical needs; excessive reliance on the government-run education system may stunt independent thought. By contrast, the dependency in China is primarily political: it is not that citizens are fed by welfare, but that the state's tight grasp on resources—such as the highly regulated real estate market, government-controlled healthcare and education, and inhibited social mobility—prevents them from living independently. In other words, while in the West dependency is predominantly economic, in China it is chiefly political.

4. Christians Within the System: Confronting the Tension Between Faith and Dependency

For Christians working within state institutions, this “political dependency” poses significant challenges to their faith:

- **Faith vs. Material Interests:** Christians in the system must balance “maintaining job security” with “living out their faith.” In an environment where political loyalty is demanded, openly expressing one's faith might hamper career advancement or even incur censorship risks.
- **Dependence on the System vs. Dependence on God:** Christianity teaches us to “trust in God rather than in the world.” Yet, in China, many people's careers, housing, healthcare, and children's education are closely tied to government policies,

making it difficult for Christians to truly free themselves from systemic dependence.

- **Freedom vs. Stability:** Christians must consider how to firmly hold onto their faith in an environment that offers stability by means of state support, without being assimilated by political pressures—all while continuing to live within the system.

This raises a key question: How can someone who is dependent on the system truly live out the freedom of their faith? This is a very real dilemma for many Christians working within state-controlled structures.

5. **Reflecting on the Question: How to Find Freedom Within Dependency?**

In facing political dependency, both ordinary citizens and Christians need to consider how to avoid being completely controlled by the system while still relying on it. Some strategies include:

1. **Enhancing Independent Thinking:**

Do not accept official propaganda blindly; instead, develop logical and critical thinking skills to seek out genuine information, even in an environment subject to information censorship.

2. **Cultivating Economic Independence:**

Reduce economic reliance on the system by, for example, engaging in investment, developing personal skills, and diversifying one's income sources.

3. **Building a Faith Community:**

Christians can, within legal limits, establish family churches or small fellowship groups to support one another and encourage spiritual growth rather than depending entirely on state-directed religious policies.

4. **Finding a Balance:**

Strive to balance the demands of faith and survival by, for instance, quietly maintaining one's faith within the system while using available resources to contribute positively to society.

As P.J. O'Rourke's viewpoint reminds us, welfare that creates dependency is not freedom. In China, the reliance on state

policy—whether through limited social welfare or direct resource control—forces citizens into a situation where personal freedom is curtailed. Ultimately, both economic welfare in the West and state-controlled dependency in China restrict true human freedom.

For Christians, this means the pursuit of freedom—both in a material and spiritual sense—must be understood in light of reliance on God rather than on any political system. Individual liberty, genuine creativity, and true wellbeing are found not in the promises of state benefits but in trusting God, pursuing truth, and living by His principles.

The essential question to ponder is: If the state controls your economy, housing, healthcare, and education, does it also control your thoughts and beliefs? This is not just a Chinese issue but a challenge faced by citizens worldwide when confronted with governmental power.

Is a Unified Religious Faith Possible?

Religion is intended for normal people in this world. Around the globe, in virtually every country (except for totalitarian regimes), although religious practices differ, the moral behavior they inspire often converges—and there must be a common guiding philosophy behind that. In other words, although different religious beliefs shape different worldviews, when believers act morally in real life (for example, by doing good, being honest, practicing forgiveness, pursuing justice), the core ideas supporting their actions may indeed share some common ground.

From this perspective, we can summarize a few major religions. For example, Confucianism (even if Confucian and Taoist traditions are not strictly “religions,” they are counted here due to their vast number of followers), Christianity, and Islam differ in their forms of worship, rituals, and theological concepts. Yet on the level of social behavior they all generally guide people to: help others (compassion), act with honesty and integrity (trustworthiness), practice forgiveness and tolerance (patience), pursue fairness (justice), and seek a transcendent spirituality, among others. These shared guiding principles indicate that the core values of major religions ultimately serve a convergent purpose in fostering social harmony, individual growth, and moral uplift. Their essential doctrines commonly include the following points:

1. There is some ultimate order in the universe that people should follow (Confucian “Heaven’s Way,” the Buddhist law of causality, the Tao, God in Christianity, and Allah in Islam).
2. Human nature is flawed and must be corrected or redeemed (through personal cultivation, spiritual practice, obedience to divine law, or faith in redemption).
3. The highest moral standard is expressed through love, justice, and self-discipline.
4. Life’s sufferings have meaning and people should face them in different ways (through taking responsibility, letting go, trusting in God, or submitting to divine will).

5. The ultimate goal of life is not earthly success but transcendence of the temporal world (as seen in the pursuit of sagehood, liberation, harmony with the Way, or entry into heaven).

In other words, regardless of what one believes, the ultimate objective is to live a more meaningful life (in the here and now), to enjoy true freedom (spiritually), and to transcend the limits of finite existence (in one's ultimate quest). This is the essence behind the apparent "convergence" of religious doctrines—and it explains why, despite differences in belief, many religious adherents end up displaying similar moral behaviors in society.

The following is divided into two parts: one is to list the core doctrines of each religion and find equivalent expressions in other religions; The second is to explore the possibility of "unity of all religions."

Part One: Expressions of Core Teachings of Different Religions

I. Confucian Core Teachings and Their Corresponding Expressions in Other Religions

1. Self-Cultivation, Family Harmony, Governance, and World Order (Personal Cultivation Influences Society)

- **Confucianism:** Advocates that "self-cultivation" is the foundation of social order; only by improving personal morality can one influence the family, the nation, and the world.

- **Buddhism:** Emphasizes "purifying one's mind," attaining enlightenment through practice, and the Bodhisattva ideal of "self-redemption and redeeming others."

- **Taoism:** Teaches the practice of self-cultivation to attain the state of "attaining the Way" and then, by practicing "non-action" (wuwei), influence society.

- **Christianity:** Stresses "spiritual growth"; a believer is transformed through faith in Jesus and then influences the world by "loving one's neighbor."

- **Islam:** Promotes the idea of "Tazkiyah" (purifying the self); one must cleanse one's desires through faith to set an example in society.

Although expressed differently, all share the idea that personal cultivation is the precondition for social harmony.

2. Ren (Humaneness or Love for Others)

- **Confucianism:** Holds Ren as the highest moral principle; Confucius teaches, “If you wish to establish yourself, help others establish themselves; if you wish to be successful, help others to succeed.” (The Analects)

- **Buddhism:** Central teaching of compassion—the Bodhisattva spirit advocates “universal compassion and oneness with all beings.”

- **Taoism:** Emphasizes that the “highest good is like water” that benefits all and that the sage “carries virtue that sustains all things,” acting gently toward others.

- **Christianity:** Jesus’ commandment “love your neighbor as yourself” is the central tenet of the New Testament.

- **Islam:** Emphasizes “Rahma” (mercy) and teaches that Allah is the “Most Merciful,” underscoring compassionate behavior.

Although expressed in various ways, all assert that love is the highest guiding norm.

3. Yi (Justice or Righteousness and Responsibility)

- **Confucianism:** Yi refers to acting in accordance with moral principles and societal responsibilities; Mencius famously states, “To risk one’s life in order to uphold righteousness.”

- **Buddhism:** The law of karma ensures that justice will ultimately prevail—good deeds yield good results and vice versa.

- **Taoism:** Believes that nature (the Way) is balanced; wrongdoing will naturally be repaid, ensuring that justice is ultimately achieved.

- **Christianity:** Affirms that God is “a God of justice” and that divine judgment will ensure righteousness.

- **Islam:** Teaches that Allah is “just” and that on the Day of Judgment all will receive their due based on their deeds. Though their language and emphasis differ, each tradition holds that an ultimate, divine or natural justice is guaranteed.

II. Buddhist Core Teachings and Their Corresponding Expressions in Other Religions

1. Rebirth and Karma

- **Buddhism:** Teaches that karma governs the cycle of rebirth—one's actions determine future fate ("good begets good, evil begets evil").
- **Confucianism:** While lacking a concept of reincarnation, Mencius taught that "a family that accumulates virtue will have lasting blessings, whereas a family that accumulates sin will suffer misfortunes," reflecting a sense of moral causality.
- **Taoism:** Holds a similar notion in the idea of "Dao follows nature," where moral actions influence one's fortune.
- **Christianity:** Though it does not subscribe to reincarnation, it teaches that "you reap what you sow" (Galatians 6:7) and that one's deeds affect the destiny of one's soul.
- **Islam:** In a manner akin to karma, the concept of "Qadr" (divine destiny) teaches that one's actions determine the outcome in the afterlife, though it does not advocate literal reincarnation.

Despite differences in concept, all these traditions agree that actions have ultimate consequences.

2. The Reality of Suffering

- **Buddhism:** Asserts that "birth, aging, sickness, and death" are inherently suffering and that the way to transcend suffering is to extinguish attachment and ignorance, eventually achieving Nirvana.
- **Confucianism:** Recognizes that life presents numerous challenges, but the wise should "understand what cannot be changed and act accordingly," upholding moral duty even in hardship.
- **Taoism:** Argues that suffering arises from going against the natural Way, and by returning to the Way, one may naturally overcome pain.

- **Christianity:** Understands suffering as a test of faith—as seen in the suffering of Jesus and the expectation that believers must endure trials on earth.
 - **Islam:** Teaches that life’s hardships serve as tests from Allah; believers are encouraged to exercise “Sabr” (patience) and trust that Allah’s rewards will eventually manifest.
- Although each emphasizes suffering differently, they agree that hardship is inherent in life—and that there is a way to overcome or transcend it.

III. Taoist Core Teachings and Their Corresponding Expressions in Other Religions

1. Wuwei (Non-Action or Effortless Action)

- **Taoism:** Advocates “wuwei” (non-action), meaning to act in accordance with the natural flow rather than through forced effort.
- **Confucianism:** Although it emphasizes diligent self-improvement, it also recognizes the role of “Heaven’s mandate,” suggesting that one should sometimes follow the natural course of events.
- **Buddhism:** Advises the relinquishment of attachment—practicing non-attachment to worldly gains.
- **Christianity:** Jesus instructs, “Do not worry about tomorrow” (Matthew 6:34), emphasizing reliance on God’s provision instead of excessive personal striving.
- **Islam:** Advocates “submission” (Islam means “submission”) to Allah, where one’s actions are aligned with the divine order.

Despite the differing terminology, they all suggest that the best approach is to align with a higher, natural or divine order rather than forcefully trying to control everything.

IV. Christian Core Teachings and Their Corresponding Expressions in Other Religions

1. Trust in God (Faith)

- **Christianity:** Teaches that by believing in Jesus as Savior, one may trust in God and receive eternal life.

- **Confucianism:** Emphasizes the concept of “Tianming” (Heaven’s mandate), whereby the superior man should revere Heaven.
- **Buddhism:** In its own way, teaches reliance on the “Three Jewels” (Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha) to achieve enlightenment.
- **Taoism:** Involves a deep trust in the “Dao,” the ultimate source and principle of the universe.
- **Islam:** Focuses on complete submission to Allah, with the understanding that only total surrender leads to true peace.

Although the expressions differ, they all invoke the need for faith in a transcendent power to guide one’s life.

V. Islamic Core Teachings and Their Corresponding Expressions in Other Religions

1. Obedience to Divine Law

- **Islam:** Instructs Muslims to follow the laws of the Qur’an and Hadith rigorously.
- **Christianity:** The Old Testament law demands strict adherence to the Ten Commandments, while the New Testament teaches “justification by faith” yet still calls for obedience to God’s ways.
- **Confucianism:** Emphasizes adherence to ritual and social norms as a path to moral order.
- **Buddhism:** Prescribes moral precepts (such as the Five Precepts: no killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, false speech, or intoxication).
- **Taoism:** Encourages a way of life marked by purity, non-action, and simplicity.

Although their language may differ, all insist that individuals should follow a set of divinely or naturally ordained laws as the correct way of living.

The examples above represent only a small portion of the wide range of religious expressions. The key takeaway is that though

the language may differ, the underlying principles are similar. In short, different religions all point to similar ultimate goals:

1. **Transcending Self – Personal Cultivation:** (Confucian self-cultivation; Buddhist Nirvana; Christian faith; Islamic submission; Taoist wuwei)
2. **Loving Others:** (Confucian Ren; Buddhist compassion; Taoist goodness; Christian love; Islamic mercy)
3. **Actions Determine Destiny:** (Buddhist karma; Christian judgment; Islamic Qadr; Confucian accumulation of virtue; Taoist natural order)
4. **Submission to a Transcendent Power:** (Confucian Tianming; Buddhist Dharma; Taoist Dao; Christian God; Islamic Allah)

Thus, although their words differ, they share the same essence.

Part Two: “Unity of All Religions”: Finding Common Light in the Diversity of Beliefs

Over the course of more than 3,000 years of human history, religion has consistently accompanied political, economic, and daily life. Just as different languages may cause miscommunication, the differences in religious beliefs—and their intersections with politics and everyday living—have led to many difficulties and misunderstandings between nations, ethnic groups, and individuals. For the human pursuit of global harmony, it is necessary, much like translation between languages, to understand one another’s religious faith and its relationship with politics and economics. The ideal of “unity of all religions” is achievable. Such a vision encourages people to set aside prejudice, repent, and live together in peace. In some cases, for reasons of benefit and survival, people must take into account both sides’ religious beliefs.

Throughout the long history of human civilization, religion as a system of belief has not only shaped personal moral perspectives but also profoundly influenced social structures. Yet, just as the diversity of languages once led to misunderstandings, the differences between religions have also been the root of conflicts—and even a source of social division, war, and

oppression. However, a review of the core doctrines of major religions reveals that they all advocate for love, justice, forgiveness, peace, and transcendence. If we can let go of prejudice and extricate ourselves from the shackles of a state-religion nexus, and seek common ground through mutual respect, then “unity of all religions” is not an unattainable utopia but a realistic path toward peace and understanding.

I. The Roots of Religious Conflict: Misunderstanding, Power, and Exclusivity

1. Misunderstanding and Ignorance: Misreading Others’ Faiths

Many religious conflicts stem from a lack of understanding about other beliefs. Due to ignorance, people often judge other religions based on prejudice or partial information, exaggerating differences and creating oppositions.

- *Crusades (11th–13th centuries):* Christians misread Muslims as “heretics,” while Muslims saw Christians as “invaders,” resulting in centuries of warfare. Yet even during these conflicts, there were periods of peaceful coexistence and cultural or academic exchange.

- *Conflicts Between Hinduism and Islam (from the Middle Ages to the present):* In India, Muslims and Hindus have clashed due to cultural and religious misinterpretations, leading to ongoing ethnic conflicts. In fact, Sufi Islam in India and Brahminical Hindu traditions have historically shared many resonances—such as an emphasis on meditation and spiritual cultivation.

How can we resolve this? True believers should proactively learn about other religions rather than relying on hearsay or stereotypes. Dialogue and education are key to dispelling misunderstandings.

2. Struggles for Power: The Oppression Arising from Church-State Fusion

When religion merges with political power, it ceases to be a refuge for the individual soul and becomes a tool of domination—leading to the oppression, persecution, and repression seen in religious inquisition.

- *Medieval Inquisitions in Europe:* The Catholic Church, intertwined with feudal power, suppressed dissent and even executed “heretics” (e.g., Giordano Bruno burned at the stake; Galileo put on trial).

- *The 1979 Iranian Islamic Revolution:* Ayatollah Khomeini established a theocratic state that restricted women’s freedoms and repressed religious minorities, transforming Iran from a more secular modern state to an extremely conservative Islamic republic.

- *China’s Historical “Promotion of Confucianism and Suppression of Buddhism”:* For instance, during Emperor Wu of Tang’s crackdown on Buddhism (845 AD), Buddhist monks were expelled and temples destroyed simply because the ruler believed that Buddhism undermined state order.

How can we resolve this? True faith should never be a political tool. Religion must remain independent so that believers can freely choose their path rather than being forced to follow a regime’s dictates.

3. **Exclusivist Beliefs: When “Truth” Becomes a Justification for Struggle**

Some religious groups believe that only they possess the “one true faith,” branding other beliefs as “heretical” or “superstitious.” This exclusivity breeds conflict.

- *Conflicts Between Protestantism and Catholicism (16th–17th centuries):* Following Martin Luther’s Reformation, brutal conflicts erupted within Christianity, leading to the Thirty Years’ War and mutual persecution, despite both groups professing belief in Jesus Christ.

- *The Rohingya Crisis in Myanmar (2017):* Extremist Buddhists, driven by ultra-nationalism, viewed the Muslim minority as “outsiders” and carried out ethnic cleansing.

- *The Israeli–Palestinian Conflict:* Although Judaism and Islam share belief in the same God, historical disputes have led to ongoing conflict.

How can we resolve this? True faith should not be based on exclusivity; rather, it should encourage people to accept different

spiritual paths with open hearts and empathy instead of judging with prejudice.

II. The Possibility of “Unity of All Religions”: Finding Common Purpose Amid Diversity

Achieving “unity of all religions” does not mean turning every belief into one identical doctrine. Rather, it means seeking common purpose under a framework of mutual respect—a commitment to bring peace and justice to the world. Some possible approaches include:

1. **Recognizing the Diversity of Faith:**Just as the world has many languages, diverse religions are a manifestation of human cultural variety. We must respect this diversity instead of trying to eliminate it.
2. **Focusing on Shared Values:**Different religions can cooperate in areas such as charitable work, social justice, environmental protection, education, and healthcare—rather than becoming mired in doctrinal disputes.
3. **Dialogue and Understanding:**People of different faiths should actively learn about one another’s doctrines, striving to overcome misunderstandings through empathy rather than judgment.
4. **Humility and Repentance:**Regardless of one’s faith, true repentance means setting aside arrogance and acknowledging that one does not possess all knowledge—that one is willing to learn from others.

When people approach religion with this attitude, religious differences cease to serve as barriers. Instead, they become different paths leading to the same truth. Through educational initiatives like courses on world religions, interfaith charity events, and peace conferences—and by ensuring separation of state and religion to protect religious freedom—we can work toward a reality where “unity of all religions” is not merely an ideal but a practical road to peace and understanding.

III. Repent of Your Prejudices, and Distance Yourself from Religious Fanaticism

“Unity of all religions” is not only a social responsibility but also an awakening for each individual. We must reflect on whether we have ever:

- Thought that the religion we follow is inherently superior?
- Dismissed or criticized other faiths out of prejudice?
- Believed religious propaganda blindly without first investigating for ourselves?

Believers of all religions need to practice true repentance by letting go of these biases and engaging in interfaith dialogue. For example, people can actively learn about other religions instead of being quick to refute them; if you discover that a foreign faith shares common values with your own, try to appreciate it rather than reject it outright. Let the public know that a true believer is one who spreads love regardless of what religion one adheres to.

“Unity of all religions” is not an unattainable utopia but a change in mindset—a process of repentance. True believers do not attack other religions but first reflect on themselves: “Do I really understand the essence of faith? Has my own belief made me more loving, humble, and honest?”

- If you are a Confucian follower, let your conduct be guided by “Ren” (benevolence) rather than moral superiority.
- If you are a Buddhist, let your compassion prevail rather than be mired in sectarian disputes.
- If you are a Taoist, let your “wuwei” (effortless action) overcome strife instead of clinging stubbornly to your own views.
- If you are a Christian, let your love lead you to forgive rather than condemn those of other faiths.
- If you are a Muslim, let your conduct be peaceful rather than falling into extremism.

When each person starts with self-reflection, religious divisions will gradually diminish. Religion then becomes a bridge connecting humanity rather than a tool for division.

In Conclusion: Let Faith Be the Bridge of Peace, Not the Fire of War

Different religions are like different languages. Although their modes of expression differ, they ultimately speak to humanity’s shared spiritual aspirations. “Let go of prejudice and the

intertwining of politics and religion” might be an ideal state. Though hard to achieve because “everyone clings to their own views,” may all parties approach one another with a repentant heart—seeking to understand, respect, and embrace each other. Let faith become a true force for peace rather than a tool for division. Wouldn’t our planet hold even greater hope if that were the case?

A Prayer for Chinese Christians to “Live Out Piety in Repentance”

But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine: that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience; the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things— that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed. Likewise, exhort the young men to be sober-minded, in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you. Exhort bondservants to be obedient to their own masters, to be well pleasing in all things, not answering back, not pilfering, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things. For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works. Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you.(Titus 2:1-15 NKJV)

In Titus chapter 2, Paul reminds us that as Christians our conduct must be a testimony of the gospel. Yet in today’s Chinese society—pressured by the state system, influenced by secular culture, entangled in workplace competition and family conflicts—we often fall into spiritual apathy or compromise. We may outwardly profess our faith, but in our actions we remain controlled by sin and weakness, unwittingly making compromises with dark forces. Remember Peter’s words, “Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you

shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 2:38, NKJV). Truly, repentance is the key to living out our faith.

Below is a prayer based on Titus 2 along with practical reflections on our current environment—where many have experienced war abroad, the submission enforced by three years of strict pandemic policies, the all-encompassing state-controlled education that stifles true knowledge, or the hunger in thought and speech from an unprecedented lack of critical expression. Every reborn Christian—especially our brothers and sisters in China, whether in “formal” church services or “unofficial” house church gatherings—must recognize that our environment challenges us to experience the life led by the Holy Spirit. We must keep our hearts free and passionate. Let us pray together:

1. For Older Brothers (Mature Male Christians, Age 55 and Above)

“Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, in patience.” (Titus 2:2 NKJV)

Prayer:

Lord, I thank You for the grace I have experienced over the years and for the growth in my faith. Help me, when faced with social changes, family responsibilities, and work pressures, to practice self-restraint and not be drawn away by the temptations of the world. Let my conduct be dignified so that I may be a righteous example in my family and community. Grant me the strength to remain self-controlled during challenges and temptations, and help me to see through worldly schemes as manifestations of Satan’s deceptions. Enable me to shelter the young from harm through my words and actions.

In this fast-paced, anxiety-ridden era, many sacrifice their principles for success. Lord, may I stand firm in faith, remain tender in love, and care for those around me so that the young may see the beauty of pious living and that my home may be blessed by my witness. Father, I confess that at times I have not been the example for others—perhaps my temper, stubbornness, or lack of spiritual insight has marred my witness. Lord, I repent! Teach me to exercise self-restraint so that I am not ruled by

anger, greed, or the lure of worldly power. Help me to be a model of piety in my neighborhood and family as I serve You faithfully. I pray this in the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen!



2. For Older Sisters (Mature Female Christians, Age 50 and Above)

“Older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things.”
(Titus 2:3 NKJV)

Prayer:

Gracious Heavenly Father, I come before You asking that You shape me into the woman who pleases You. In a world filled with gossip, social pressure, and superficial comparisons, help me to remain reverent, to conduct myself with dignity, and to avoid speaking slander or strife in my family, friendship circles, or church. May my words promote peace and wisdom.

Lord, in our materially driven and anxiety-laden society, many fill the void within with consumption, alcohol, and entertainment. Please preserve me from becoming a slave to these things, and let Your Word satisfy me instead. Empower me to be a blessing to the younger generation by demonstrating proper conduct and gentle strength. Help me to support women who are struggling emotionally and spiritually, so they may experience the fullness of Your faith and abundant life.

Father, I confess that I may have unintentionally spoken harsh words or participated in discord. I ask for forgiveness and pray that You would grant me a spirit of wisdom and peace so that I

may no longer be bound by slander or quarrels. Lord, renew my heart so that I become an encouragement for the young, not their burden.

I pray this in the precious name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen!

3. For Young Brothers (Male Youth, Age 18 and Above)

“Young men likewise exhort to be sober-minded.” (Titus 2:6 NKJV)

Prayer:

Lord, I recognize that as a young man my passions and impulses often lead me into temptation—whether through the pursuit of fame, material gain, rivalry, or even in the excesses of alcohol and revelry. Grant me the strength to remain sober-minded and to choose Your way when faced with the allure of worldly temptations. Help me stand firm in the midst of a society dominated by power, money, and connections. Teach me that true success is measured by inner integrity rather than external achievements, and guide me to make choices that honor You in every area of my life.

I confess that I have, at times, lost control in anger, jealousy, or selfish ambition. Have I neglected my relationship with You in favor of striving after success? Have I compromised my moral standards by too eagerly chasing worldly gain? Lord, I repent! Help me to resist the temptations of greed, pride, and the conflicts driven by societal pressure. Grant me self-discipline so that I may stand firm, not slanting toward any compromise, but holding true to the truth of Your Word.

I ask that You mold me into a man of integrity in my workplace, at home, and in my church community—one who leads by example and courageously pursues righteousness. I pray this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen!

4. For Young Sisters (Female Youth, Age 18 and Above)

“That they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.” (Titus 2:4–5 NKJV)

Prayer:

Lord, I come before You acknowledging the many roles You have entrusted to me—both in pursuing my career and in nurturing my family. In this modern society, women face tremendous expectations and responsibilities, which can leave us feeling overwhelmed and uncertain. Teach me, O Lord, to love my husband and children not merely by obedience but with a heart full of genuine love. Help me to be proactive and to build a home that reflects Your truth.

Father, I desire to live in a manner that honors You in every area—be it in my relationships, in my work, or in the commitments of daily life. Help me to remain chaste, not only in my physical actions but in my thoughts and emotions. May I manage our household with wisdom and grace, fostering an environment where peace and stability flourish. Guide me to show kindness in all my dealings, and grant me the strength to remain submissive to those God has placed in my life, not out of fear or oppression, but out of love and respect.

Lord, I confess that there have been moments when my heart has leaned toward self-interest and pride, and I have neglected the needs of those most dear to me. I repent and ask for Your forgiveness. Fill me with Your wisdom and help me live out Your standards of holiness and grace. May my life be a beacon of hope and a testament to Your abundant blessings.

I pray this in the powerful name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen!

5. For Christians in the Workplace (Employees)

“Exhort bondservants to be obedient to their own masters, to be well-pleasing in all things, not answering back, not pilfering, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things.” (Titus 2:9–10 NKJV)

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, I face many challenges in the workplace—inequity, misunderstanding, fierce competition, and intense pressure. Grant me the wisdom, Lord, to obey my superiors not out of fear but in genuine commitment to serve as a witness of Your truth. Help me to refrain from complaining or

rebellious, and to work with a humble and respectful attitude even when faced with injustice.

Lord, I ask that You cleanse my heart so that I conduct myself with honesty in every financial matter. May I not resort to dishonest practices or take what does not belong to me, whether it be money, time, or any of the resources entrusted to me. I confess that at times, the fierce competition in the workplace has tempted me to compromise my values. Forgive me, Lord, and fortify my spirit so that I would rather sacrifice personal gain than compromise Your righteousness.

I know that I work not for my own glory but for You, and that all my achievements and even my mistakes are under Your sovereign guidance. Empower me to be a light in my workplace—a true example of integrity—so that even under pressure, I may not deviate from the path of truth.

I pray this in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen!

6. A Common Prayer for All Believers: Repentance and Returning to God

“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age.”
(Titus 2:11–12 NKJV)

Prayer:

Lord, we, as Your people, come before You to confess our sins. We acknowledge that, without the precious blood of Christ, our sins cannot be forgiven. You gave Yourself for us to redeem us from all sin and to cleanse us, making us Your special possession. O Lord, help us, having received this tremendous grace, not to fall back into the snare of sin but to earnestly pursue holiness and live out our new lives in You.

Grant that we may return to the “childlike” simplicity that Jesus spoke of—a spirit of humility and obedience rather than following the misguided directions of those who have replaced You with false gods. We know that those who steal Your glory here on earth will one day be judged by You.

May we, in our daily lives—whether in our families, workplaces, or churches—earnestly practice love, integrity, and godliness, so that our faith is not mere words but a living testimony. Lord, we admit that under the pressures of the system, culture, workplace, and family, we often compromise and lose sight of true piety. We have grown cold, proud, and have sought worldly approval, unknowingly aligning ourselves with the forces of darkness. Yet Your grace is our strength for repentance!

Lord, we ask that You renew our hearts, so that in every area of our lives our testimony may shine forth and bring glory to Your name. Help us to reject Satan's traps, to stay true to the standards of Your Word, and to be examples of righteousness in all that we do.

We pray all this in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen!

May this prayer guide each believer—whether older or younger, in the home or the workplace—to live a life marked by genuine repentance and piety, reflecting God's glory in every sphere of life.

The Contemporary Significance of “The Debate Between Hu Shi and Liang Shuming”

Introduction:

“The Liang-Hu Debate” refers to the famous ideological exchange in 1930 between Liang Shuming and Hu Shi concerning the “fundamental problems of China.” This debate vividly embodied the divergent approaches proposed by modern Chinese intellectuals regarding how to save the nation. At that time, China was beset by internal turmoil and external aggression. In 1930, Hu Shi published an essay titled “Which Road Shall We Take?” (note: the character used in the title was meant to be “which” rather than “that”), and soon thereafter Liang Shuming wrote an open letter questioning why Hu Shi would not acknowledge that “imperialism and warlords are China’s greatest enemies,” instead attributing the nation’s ills to internal issues such as poverty, disease, ignorance, corruption, and social disorder. Hu Shi responded by asserting that Japan, too, suffered from the oppression of great powers, and that China’s predicament stemmed primarily from its own accumulated evils—like the rampant opium trade and widespread corruption. In contrast, Liang Shuming stressed that imperialism, through economic invasion, deepened China’s poverty, and that the division of China by warlords was in fact orchestrated by foreign powers.

This debate reflected the clash between cultural conservatism and complete Westernization. Liang advocated seeking a basis for renewal from within traditional culture, while Hu promoted scientific methods and modernization. Despite their differing positions, both sought to provide an intellectual roadmap for China’s salvation—and their debate still offers instructive insights today.

In what follows, we revisit the “heart-chilling changes” that once divided these great scholars to see who has gradually made us lose our courage, our sense of justice, our expectations for society, and even our ability to distinguish right from wrong. More importantly, can we ever regain the goodness and courage we

have lost? Finally, we reflect on how, in the face of these changes, we—as disciples of Christ—can remain clear-headed, discern right from wrong, and make the choices that are expected of us. Below are several examples for our collective contemplation:

I. Hu Shi’s “Five Demons” Versus Liang Shuming’s Opposition: A Debate That Transcends Time

In 1930, Hu Shi published “Which Road Shall We Take?”, in which he argued that China’s fundamental problems were not due to “external enemies” but stemmed from five internal evils—what he called the “Five Demons”: poverty, disease, ignorance, corruption, and social disorder. In this essay he even set aside the political proposals of the three major parties of the time—the Kuomintang, the Youth Party, and the Communist Party—to directly point to the unstable foundations of Chinese society. Hu emphasized that genuine national rejuvenation could only occur if these internal ills were solved before focusing solely on external struggles.

However, Liang Shuming objected. He believed that China’s foremost enemy was not its internal defects but rather imperialism and external powers. In other words, his line of thought was closer to an “external enemy” theory—that the nation’s backwardness and suffering were primarily the result of foreign oppression.

This “Liang-Hu Debate” thus came to represent two typical ideological routes in response to China’s reality at the time:

1. **Hu Shi’s “Self-Innovation Theory”:**He maintained that China’s problems were mainly internal. China must first thoroughly reform itself—addressing poverty, improving education, governance, and thought—in order to resolve the national problem over the long term. No matter which political party came to power, the “Five Demons” had to be eradicated first.

2. **Liang Shuming’s “External Enemy Theory”:**He stressed the role of foreign powers, attributing China’s plight mainly to the pressure of imperialism and contending that China’s primary

task was to resist the great powers, with internal issues being secondary.

Hu Shi's viewpoint was more far-seeing and comprehensive, whereas Liang Shuming's perspective, to some extent, catered to specific political forces and obscured the real domestic issues.



II. From History to the Present: The Core of Chinese Governance Remains the Elimination of the “Five Demons”

If Hu Shi were alive today, it is likely he would still maintain his view—and the “Five Demons” would have morphed into even more complex contemporary dilemmas. Although modern China has achieved tremendous economic development, from the standpoint of governance and social issues the shadow of the Five Demons persists, albeit in new forms:

1. **Corruption of Power:** The unchecked power and lack of restraint continue to breed corruption. The ruling elite expands while social resources become concentrated in the hands of a few, and the living conditions of ordinary people steadily deteriorate.
2. **Entrenched Wealth Inequality:** The gap between the rich and the poor has evolved from one of disparity to one of entrenchment. Social mobility has declined, upward opportunities for ordinary people have narrowed, and the class divide grows ever deeper.
3. **Distorted Education:** Education is no longer aimed at cultivating independent thinkers; rather, it increasingly serves the state, conditioning people to absorb a singular, uniform ideology. Professions such as scholars, journalists, and professors have lost their true societal value.

4. **Intellectual Confinement:** Public thought is heavily controlled. People are not free to express themselves or discuss critical issues that affect the nation's future.

5. **Pressing Environmental Challenges:** Issues such as food safety, air pollution, and ecological degradation have put immense pressure on people's very existence, leaving them to live in a state of chronic anxiety and internal strife.

The phrases "corruption of power, entrenched wealth inequality, distorted education, intellectual confinement, and a pressurized living environment" summarize the core contradictions of today's society—the "new Five Demons." If these problems are not addressed, the nation's governance predicament will persist indefinitely, possibly leading to even deeper social crises. These issues are not caused by external forces, but arise from internal governance failures. If a country cannot face its internal issues but instead always blames everything on external enemies, it risks falling into an "imaginary enemy trap," diverting public attention from the real social contradictions. Such thinking is a continuation of Liang Shuming's old perspective.

III. Envisioning the Main Measures Being Taken in China Today According to Liang Shuming's Thought

At present, many of China's governing ideologies resemble Liang Shuming's "external enemy theory." China's deep-seated problems during the development process are increasingly blamed on external pressure and an unfavorable international environment rather than on domestic institutional or social structure issues. This is evident in several manifestations:

1. **Strengthening Nationalism and the Narrative of External Threats:** Societal discontent, economic pressure, and public anxiety are increasingly linked to narratives like "foreign containment of China's development" or "Western hostility toward China" to unify public opinion and suppress dissent.

2. **Reinforcing National Consciousness and Diluting Critical Thinking in Education:** The inclusion of "ideological education" in textbooks emphasizes obedience, patriotism, and collectivism, while downplaying the cultivation of individual rights,

independent character, and a free spirit—aligning with Liang Shuming’s notion of “moral education for the people and submission to the national cause.”

3. **Media and Public Opinion Focusing on External Struggles:** Emphasis is placed on the US–China rivalry and slogans like “Their desire to destroy us never dies,” which reduces focus on domestic structural flaws and guides the public to remain silent on internal issues while being perpetually wary of external threats.

4. **Development Strategies Focused on “Self-Reliance” in Response to External Technology Blockades:** Although the rhetoric is one of “self-replacement,” much of it centers on countering external technological sanctions rather than on comprehensive institutional reform and unleashing grassroots vitality.

Today in China, many people habitually interpret national problems using system-centric language and political propaganda instead of engaging in independent thought. They may say:

“Western countries don’t want China to rise!”

“Our difficulties are because the external environment is so harsh!”

“Foreign hostile forces are at work!”

But if we think calmly, we realize that what truly causes suffering for the common people are not foreigners but the “new Five Demons”:

- It is entrenched wealth inequality—not Western nations—that keeps the underclass from rising.
- It is a distorted education system—not foreign capital—that makes studying ever more burdensome and work increasingly competitive.
- It is intellectual confinement—not external propaganda warfare— that stifles thought and hinders innovation.
- It is a pressurized living environment—not Western sanctions— that makes life insecure.

China’s real problems are not merely about party competition or external enemies, but rather about whether we have the courage

to confront the “new Five Demons” and to carry out deep, systemic reforms. Hu Shi saw this as early as 1930, and today we must no longer avoid facing reality. Hong Kong and Macau have “reunited” with the mainland—how have they developed? Even when mainlanders go there, they essentially find no difference. Is peaceful reunification truly the will of the people? Perhaps the greatest benefit for Taiwan’s officials after reunification might simply be the end of asset disclosure, right?

Who Is Hiding the “New Five Demons”?

IV. The Core of Governance Is Not “Party Struggles,” but Nationwide Reform

While Hu Shi clearly observed the political polarizations among the Kuomintang, the Youth Party, and the Communist Party, he maintained that China’s real problem was not which party held power but that every regime must fundamentally eradicate the “Five Demons.” He warned people not to be misled by partisan strife, but instead to clearly recognize that what the Chinese people need is an improvement in governance capacity rather than a simple change of banners.

In contrast, Liang Shuming’s “external enemy theory” might have resonated with the nationalist sentiment of his time, but it did not actually offer a genuine governing plan. Instead, it provided certain political forces with an opportunity to use “external antagonism” as a pretext to cover up domestic problems. This approach not only occurred in the 1930s but persists today—many people still habitually blame all problems on external forces rather than confronting their own deep-seated structural contradictions.

Hu Shi’s thought reminds us that regardless of who governs or what era it is, a nation’s true strength must be built from addressing its fundamental governance issues, not by relying on nationalist sentiment to cover up its problems.

V. The Responsibility of Christians—Courageously Seeking Truth and Leading Change

When confronting social problems, Christians should set an example, for the Christian faith emphasizes truth, justice, courage, love, and transformation.

- Christians should not blindly follow political rhetoric; they must use truth to discern right from wrong.
- Christians must not avoid social realities but actively work to promote justice and fairness.
- Christians should not focus solely on their personal spiritual disciplines but must also shine as the light and salt in society, influencing the times.

Jesus said, “And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:32). If even Christians are too afraid to confront reality, challenge injustice, and speak truth, then society will continue to languish under the rule of the “new Five Demons.”

VI. How Can We Truly Achieve National Rejuvenation?

If today’s China is to attain true national rejuvenation, we cannot continue using Liang Shuming’s “external enemy theory” as an excuse to avoid real issues. As Hu Shi advocated, reforms must be approached from several angles:

1. **Political Reform:** Establish a truly transparent and efficient governing system that reduces rent-seeking and implements genuine rule of law rather than rule by personality.
2. **Reducing Wealth Disparity:** Create a reasonable mechanism for wealth distribution that increases social mobility and provides ordinary people with hope, rather than entrenching wealth and power within a fixed class.
3. **Educational Innovation:** Transform education from a tool merely for producing obedient workers into a system that fosters independent, creative, and internationally competitive talent rather than “obedient tools.”
4. **Intellectual Liberation:** Allow freedom of expression and diverse viewpoints. Only a society with active and open thought can truly drive national progress rather than one mired in self-enclosure.

5. **Ecological Improvement:** Address food safety, air pollution, and urban living conditions so that people can live healthily and securely, not in constant fear over their living environment.

These directions require the collective effort of the entire nation—they are not merely the responsibility of one political party but of society as a whole.

VII. Conclusion: Do Not Be People Who Merely Echo Others—Be the Vanguard of Change

Today's Chinese people must no longer use “external enemies” as an excuse to avoid facing real problems. Instead, we should adopt a more pragmatic, clear-headed, and self-critical attitude regarding our nation's future. The “Five Demons” of Hu Shi's day remain applicable today—having evolved into the “new Five Demons”: corruption of power, entrenched wealth, distorted education, intellectual confinement, and environmental degradation.

I hope more people will reflect further: if we truly desire national rejuvenation, we must not simply debate a change of leadership or let different parties vie for power. Rather, we must aim for a national awakening—courageously confronting our internal issues and daring to innovate. This is the true answer to Hu Shi's question: “Which road shall we take?”

Historical truth will not vanish because it is hidden, and societal hope will not shine amid silence. Truly awakened Chinese people should not be mere tools for any party nor simply echo what everyone else says. Instead, they must become the driving force for change in the future.

The Guidance of the Spirit and Genuine Growth: Finding the Way Back Amid the Absence of Love

Introduction: The Spirit Is the Root of All Our Actions

Every person carries within a spirit—a true inner self that is not limited by nationality, ethnicity, skin color, status, or age. From childhood to adulthood, from students to workers, although the education one receives, one’s family environment, social influences, and political systems may change, the ultimate factor that determines whether one makes pious, just, compassionate, and honest choices remains the spirit within one’s heart. This spirit—the “navigator of the true self”—determines whether a person chooses forgiveness or revenge, integrity or compromise, compassion or indifference. It is the real driving force behind everything we do.

In everyday life, we often manage people through education, institutions, and rules. Yet what truly determines whether someone is loving, compassionate, responsible, or courageous in choosing righteousness is that inner spirit. The issue is that this spirit is never neutral—it either leans toward holiness or becomes corrupted by evil.

Part One: The Guidance of the Spirit and the Foundation of Spiritual Growth

1. The Growth of the Spirit Is Not Innate; It Needs Love as Its Nourishment

A person’s spirit does not come complete at birth but is continuously shaped by family, society, and life experiences. The Bible tells us that the human heart is deceitful and that the battle between good and evil is fought within the spirit. However, this does not mean that children inherently distinguish between the holy and the wicked. Whether a child experiences love, respect, acceptance, and comfort will deeply influence the direction of their spirit as they grow up. Many who suffer from depression lack basic love and a sense of security from a young age—so much so that even the need to be loved or held is not properly met. At that stage, a child does not yet understand the spiritual

battle between the Holy Spirit and the evil spirit; they simply feel: “I long for love. I long to be held and seen.” We must not simply dismiss this longing as sin, for the human desire to be loved, affirmed, and satisfied is part of God’s design. Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these” (Matthew 19:14). This is not merely a welcome for children; it is a spiritual reminder that a person’s ability to freely come into love determines whether they can answer the call of holiness.

2. Unfulfilled Desires Can Become Openings for Evil Spirit Attacks

If a person’s spirit is twisted early on by neglect, humiliation, abuse, or suppression, their heart may be controlled by the lies of “being unworthy” or “not deserving of love.” Such a deficiency becomes a black hole that continuously drains one’s emotional capacity as an adult. Such a person might repeatedly seek to fill that void in relationships, only to be hurt again and again; they may feel shame, avoid the call of the holy, or be unable to respond when confronted with calls for righteousness. A person in this situation does not fail to do good out of unwillingness but rather because their spirit lacks the strength to act righteously. They never learn to trust or accept love—or to reciprocate it. Perhaps their basic needs for survival and recreation were never met or were maliciously denied by the love (or lack thereof) in their family. As a result, they may live a lifetime filled with anger, self-condemnation, shame, anxiety, and fear—the very conditions that evil spirits exploit most easily. The Apostle Paul reminds us, “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:12). Today’s spiritual warfare is not merely a theological abstraction—it unfolds in the broken souls of individuals.

3. The Work of the Holy Spirit Is to Restore the Spirit and Rebuild Freedom and Love

Jesus Christ did not come to condemn these broken spirits but to heal them: “He has come to set the captives free; He has come to

give sight to the blind, to release the oppressed” (Luke 4:18). The Holy Spirit does not change people by oppression, legalism, or condemnation; rather, He awakens the inner light and truth that were present in our souls from the beginning. This restoration is the only means by which a person can truly “come back to life.” Many only encounter faith in adulthood and, through the Holy Spirit, recover the child within who was never properly loved. They weep; they struggle; and they begin to learn to forgive their parents, to forgive themselves, and to face past wounds. And the Holy Spirit never despises their slowness; He gently says, “I have always been waiting for you.”

In summary, we should not be hasty in attributing all “desires” to sin, nor should we idealize some notion of a “rational spiritual person.” For a person’s spirit to be nurtured in holiness, it must first receive genuine responses and guidance for its true desires. Those who grow up without love or whose needs are unmet—or even maliciously deprived—may find it nearly impossible, in adulthood and without the light of the gospel, to discern the voice of the Holy Spirit from that of evil. Some may even be led by an evil, desire-driven spirit into antisocial behavior. Therefore, within the church, family, and community, we must create a safe space so that people are first loved and then learn to love; they are first accepted and then learn to choose the light. Pastors must do more than simply transmit the word of Christ; they must also pray earnestly for repentance, cast aside their own character flaws, transform their lives into living examples of Christ’s love, and thereby gain the ability to shine His light and actively guide others to learn the love of Christ. Jesus did not come to condemn our incompleteness but to restore us—so that our spirits may once again be directed toward truth, goodness, and true freedom. That is the very purpose of His salvation.

May we all, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, discern the voice of the spirit—without rushing to judgment but with courageous compassion; may we not dismiss our wounds lightly but instead be filled with mercy. May the Holy Spirit dwell in our hearts and, through us, bring comfort and support to many who are struggling in their spirits.

Part Two: The Thirst for Love and Intergenerational Crisis—The Social Consequences of a Spirit Left Without Nourishment

1. Adults Themselves Long to Be Loved and Seen

Many Christian parents teach the Bible to their children yet find that their kids are indifferent, withdrawn, or even depressed. Why is that? Because they, too, have never truly experienced being comforted or affirmed—a lack of “love deposits”—yet are expected to give love.

- Husbands long to be respected and acknowledged.
- Wives long to be listened to and accompanied.
- Elderly people long to avoid marginalization.
- Middle-aged individuals desire not merely to be “tools” for others.
- Youth yearn not just to be ordered around.

When such needs remain unmet, one’s spirit is likely to wither. “You cannot give what you do not have.” This is both a practical and a spiritual truth. Christ did not come to make us experts in scripture so that we can hide our own lack of love behind a façade of people-pleasing behavior. The essence lies in repenting before Christ and, following His guidance, doing all we can by our strength.

2. A Loveless Home Will Produce Another Generation Starved for Love

When there is no warmth between spouses, and children do not experience intimacy or trust; when parents never say “I love you” so that children never learn to say “I trust you”; when a home is filled only with orders rather than genuine companionship, and teaching without listening prevails—the biblical principles become a heavy burden of law. Such homes do not cultivate the fruit of the Spirit, but instead produce individuals who are emotionally numb, self-closed, prematurely hardened, or excessively avoidant. Their future approach to marriage, outlook on life, and view of faith will inevitably bear the marks of brokenness. “Fathers, do not exasperate your children; rather, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4).

3. Depression Is Not Merely an Emotional Issue, But a Response to Spiritual Starvation

At its core, depression cries out: “I am meaningless, misunderstood, unloved.” On the surface, it appears to be an emotional illness, yet underneath it often signals a spiritual disconnect. Their spirit is crying out but cannot express the pain; although it ought to be the time for this spirit to pursue a life of freedom and joy, it finds that it has already been injured or rendered incomplete. The basic needs that should have been met in childhood remain unmet, and as adults, they cannot fill that void. Even within the church, many believers cannot move from the “sanctity of doctrinal truth” into genuine relational connection because their early desires were never correctly satisfied or guided.

4. The Church Must Not Only Teach “God’s Love” But Also “How to Love One Another”

The Bible declares, “We love because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19). Yet, in reality, many believers have never experienced a tangible expression of “God first loving people.” Love is concrete, active, and perceptible—it is the visible work of the Holy Spirit on earth.

5. The Solution: Reuniting Love and Truth so that the Spirit Might Awaken Again

To address this issue, many measures must be taken—especially by parents who, according to their unique circumstances, must act. For example:

- ✓ Give children full emotional responses rather than merely teaching moral precepts.
- ✓ Offer your spouse affirmation and listening, rather than merely tolerating until tension explodes.
- ✓ Carve out space for personal prayer and honest confession rather than forcing yourself to “be strong in the Lord” as a way to cover your wounds.

6. The Holy Spirit is the spirit of freedom; His healing begins when we admit, “I need love,” instead of trying to cover our pain with a façade of self-reliance. Learning to be vulnerable is the start of receiving love.

Conclusion: Returning to the Healing of the Holy Spirit, Restoring Through Love

Today, we see increasing cases of depression, anxiety, declining marriage and fertility rates, violent tendencies, and spiritual numbness. In truth, behind all of these is the cry of the spirit: “Am I still worthy of love? Can I still trust others? Can I still draw near to God?” The answer is yes—but you must first be seen, healed, and renewed in the Holy Spirit.

Let us begin now, allowing ourselves to acknowledge our need to be loved as parents; to offer more acceptance and attentive listening to our spouses; to spend more time with our children without rushing to discipline; and to devote more time to prayer and honest confession for ourselves. May we nourish our spirit so that the Holy Spirit is not locked away, and may love flow again in our homes, communities, and across generations. This is the beginning of genuine growth. Let us pray together:

Epilogue

As I look back on the path I have walked, I am struck not by how far I have come, but by how often I have been carried. There were times when grief hollowed out my soul—watching my loved ones suffer, watching systems turn cold and indifferent, watching myself fall short of the truth I claimed to believe. And yet, in those very moments, I felt the nearness of a Savior who did not abandon me to the silence.

Faith in China is not abstract. It is gritty, slow, often hidden. It is formed in hospital waiting rooms, whispered prayers at night, and decisions made in quiet rebellion against a culture of fear. It does not always lead to outward triumph, but it always points inward—toward a Kingdom not of this world.

This book was never meant to be a theological treatise. It is, at its heart, a journal of survival and grace. It is the record of a man who lived through the storms of bureaucracy, political conformity, and personal collapse, and who found, in Jesus Christ, a refuge that no ideology could offer.

To the Chinese brothers and sisters who walk a similar road: you are not alone. To those in the global church who pray for China: your prayers matter more than you know. And to anyone still searching: the door is open. The Shepherd knows your name.

My journey continues. But I no longer walk alone.

—Ming Hu

**But as for me and my house,
we will serve the Lord.**

(Joshua 24:15c NKJV)